

STUDIES IN THEORY AND HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY



THE INDIGENOUS LENS? •

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY
IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

Edited by Markus Ritter
and Staci G. Scheiwiller

DE GRUYTER

The history of photography as a global discipline has only recently taken serious notice of early photography in the Near and Middle East, although in these regions the new technique was quickly adopted by the 1840s. Which regional, local, and global aspects can be made evident? What role did local visual and art traditions have? Which specific functions did photography serve following its introduction? This anthology includes contributions on early photography in the Ottoman Empire, its Arab lands, and in Qajar Iran. They deal with questions of local specifics, actors, and agendas of photography, and the notion of an “indigenous lens.” One goal is to rupture categories of “lenses” that have become part of the discourse on nineteenth-century photography in the Near and Middle East. The anthology brings together a wide spectrum of scholarly themes, from presentations of available archival material and revisionist histories to critical methodologies of how to deal with local aspects of photography. It offers, for the first time in book form, a cross-section through the developing field of early photo history in the Near and Middle East and constitutes a call to include what is considered local photography within the global narrative of the history of photography.

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Printed with generous financial support from the Dr. Carlo Fleischmann Foundation (see www.dcff.org) in Zurich, the Dr. h. c. Kaspar M. Fleischmann Project to Support Research on Photography at the Chair for the History of the Fine Arts, Institute of Art History of the University of Zurich, and from the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies, University of Vienna.

ISBN 978-3-11-049135-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>

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Cover: From the series "Image of Imagination" by Bahman Jalali 2003. © Rana Javadi

Editing of the Series: Martin Steinbrück

Printing and Binding: DZA Druckerei zu Altenburg GmbH, Altenburg

This paper is resistant to aging (DIN/ISO 9706)

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

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FOREWORD

Early photography in the Near and Middle East has received some scholarly and also public attention over the past years though not the amount it may deserve. The photography of these regions is often considered as a local division of nineteenth-century photography as a global phenomenon. Yet “global” tends to be equated with European and North American photography, rendering “local” either a derivative of them or something outside or separate. This anthology discusses local specifics in early photography of the Near and Middle East, which participated in global photography just as other regions did, and the notion of an “indigenous lens” in writing its photo history. It appeals to insert this local photography, as well as others, into a global photo history, and makes an effort toward balancing and shifting its narrative.

The nucleus of this anthology was an international guest lecture series at the Institute of Art History at the University of Zurich, organized by Markus Ritter in the winter term 2011 within “The Geography of Photography” series run by the Center for Studies in the Theory and History of Photography, which is directed by Bettina Gockel, professor for History of Fine Arts at the Institute. At that time six colleagues most kindly participated in the series: Layla S. Diba (New York), Carmen Pérez González (Dusseldorf, now Wuppertal), Nancy Micklewright (Washington DC), Staci G. Scheiwiller (Turlock), Wendy Shaw (Bern, now Berlin) and Claude Sui (Mannheim).¹

The project of creating a collective volume based on these lectures and supplemented by further contributions was delayed when Ritter moved from Zurich to the Department of Art History at the University of Vienna, as professor for History of Islamic Art in 2012, and soon took up additional tasks in the Department. When Staci G. Scheiwiller, now associate professor for Modern and Contemporary Art History at the California State University, Stanislaus, and one of the lecturers in the initial series, stayed as Käthe Leichter Visiting Professor at the University of Vienna in the winter term 2014/15, she ventured to share the editing task. Thanks to her the number of contributions increased and the manuscript grew. Production continued until this year’s summer break allowed the finishing touches to be added in Vienna.

We would like to express sincere thanks to all who helped in producing the manuscript and moving it into print. Our foremost thanks go, on the one hand, to the authors who contributed to the anthology and patiently trusted in the project, and on the other, to Bettina Gockel who proposed and continuously supported the project. She also accepted the anthology for publication in the book series “Studies in Theory and History of Photography” edited by her, after the International Advisory Board had provided a fruitful criticism of the book project and approved the final anthology. We are most grateful to the Dr. Carlo Fleischmann Stiftung and to Dr. h.c. Kaspar M. Fleischmann (Zurich) for funding the publication. The Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna provided assistance for copyediting. Sarah Teetor (Vienna) checked the English language of texts. Patience is the word again when thanking the publisher De Gruyter (Akademie Verlag) and Martin Steinbrück, Kerstin Protz, Anja Weisenseel and Katja Richter for their concerted efforts of turning the manuscript into a beautiful book.

The two editors have different academic, disciplinary, and methodological backgrounds within art history, but they share an interest in nineteenth-century photography in Iran, which goes back to their doctoral theses, viewing photographs in one case as a visual document of art in Qajar Iran, in the other case as a source of photo art in contemporary Iran. The lecture series in Zurich had employed a beautiful photo artwork by the late Iranian photographer Bahman Jalali (1944–2010) from his “Image of Imagination” series (2000–2008) in order to advertise the program. Jalali was also a photo historian and collector of early photography, and in the series he used magnified details from early photographs (Fig. 3 on p. 24).² We have used this image again on the cover of this anthology, because it can signify a contemporary concern of artists and societies of the Near and Middle East with early photography, perceived as artistic and visual historic heritage, and a contribution to art in general. While such artworks may be seen as a visual comment on photo history, this anthology provides a written one.

Vienna and Turlock, October 2017

NOTES

- 1 See the program at: <http://www.khist.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:ffffff-e440-edf6-0000-000018-b629b9/gop_2011.pdf> (last access July 17, 2017). Layla Diba's lecture was already planned to be published separately: Diba 2013.
- 2 See in the “Introduction” of the present volume, pp. 23–24.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Due to the diversity of essays, the editors have attempted to keep transliteration simple yet reflective of the respective languages. For Arabic and Persian, the signs for the letters *hamza* and *'ayn* were retained but not for Ottoman Turkish. Likewise, different spellings for similar words were used according to language and to pronunciation, such as “Muhammad” in Arabic but “Mohammad” in Persian. Long vowels are not indicated by diacritics. Words that have entered the English language are spelled without transliteration.

INTRODUCTION:

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST
AND THE NOTION OF AN “INDIGENOUS LENS”

Very soon after its official announcement, photography was introduced to the Near and Middle East. The new medium became a global phenomenon of the nineteenth century, and its themes, visuality, and practices were arguably shared wherever it was used. As is well-known, photography was invented and disseminated in Europe where, in France in 1839, the daguerreotype was presented to the world, and in Britain in 1841, the calotype, or talbotype, was introduced. The wet collodion technique was discovered in 1851, and in the United States celluloid film and in 1888 the Kodak handheld camera were invented and subsequently marketed around the world. The techniques and their uses in a studio or outdoors created certain requirements that were universal, thus spreading European norms of depiction across the globe. As a discipline, the history of photography, through this inception, has foregrounded early photography in Europe and North America. While this narrative has emphasized the global diffusion and universal impact of European photography, it has underexposed local photography in other regions where the new pictorial medium was quickly adopted.

This volume brings current scholarship on local photography of the nineteenth century in the regions of the Near and Middle East to an international discussion. Photography in the Ottoman Empire, its Arab provinces and Egypt, and in Qajar Iran has generally been viewed as a practice by European travelers and an import by European photographers who established studios in Istanbul, Beirut, Cairo, and Tehran. They brought the aesthetics, poses, postures, and compositions of portrait, landscape, and documentary photography, which were adopted by local apprentices and their successors who also may have gone to Europe to learn the techniques of photography. In this narrative, written by European and North American scholars, photography in the Near and Middle East—such as surveyed as an entity thirty years ago by Nissan Perez (1988)—along with the practice of European travelers visiting the region, belongs to the story of early photography as a global phenomenon dominated by Europe.¹ However, for some time photo history has started to question this dominance and to look for local actors and agendas of early photography.

In this anthology, the term “indigenous lens” serves as a metaphor for local and vernacular photographic practices, visual traditions, actors, uses, and contexts of photography, or in other words, for an alternative view of photo history in the region. This designation and regional focus are both useful and problematic, as will be discussed below, but resonate with various contemporary concerns in recent scholarship on early photography in the Near and Middle East. The contributions to this volume attempt to investigate and refine such notions as to what an “indigenous lens” could look like, which also may be of a more general relevance beyond the region itself.

THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This volume deals with the period from the announcement of the daguerreotype in 1839 to c. 1920, as a part of the “long nineteenth century,” or *longue durée*, of modernization processes around the globe. The geographical scope on what today is called the “Near and Middle East” does not mean to perceive this larger region indiscriminately as a homogeneous entity, such as in the nineteenth-century European understanding of “the Orient,” or in the current one of an “Islamic world,” which are essentializing and potentially misleading constructs. Like “the West” and “Europe,” also constructed entities, the larger region was diverse in many aspects and traditions, while its countries, as different as they were from each other, were also interconnected and shared various political, social, and cultural aspects.²

The nineteenth-century Near and Middle East comprised states and political entities that had traditions of dynastic rule and perceived themselves as Islamic, while their populations were multi-religious and multi-ethnic: the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923), ruled by sultans from Istanbul; its Arab provinces including Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula; Egypt, which acted like an independent state under the khedives of the dynasty of Muhammad Ali although it was under Ottoman suzerainty (1805–82), and later became a British protectorate (1882–1922); and Iran, ruled from Tehran by the Qajar shahs (1785–1925). Besides large Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian and other religious communities and elites, the majority of the population was Muslim, divided into Sunni and heterodox communities, mostly in the Ottoman Empire and its Arab provinces, and into Shiites, mostly in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. A multitude of different languages was spoken, but in fact each state and region favored one language as the official and culturally dominant one: Ottoman Turkish in the Ottoman Empire; in addition, Arabic in the Arab provinces and in Egypt; Persian in Iran. These main three languages are linguistically distinct, as each belongs to a different family of languages, but they shared the use of

the Arabic alphabet and a substantial vocabulary and number of loanwords, which had moved from one language into the others.

The introduction of photography was met with much interest by the elites in the Near and Middle East. Photography as a medium of images was generally seen as a technical process based on natural sciences, that produced an image of reality, but not as an act of creation, that might meet religious objection. In the Ottoman Empire and in Qajar Iran, photography was quickly used as a means to visually explore and document the country. In Iran, the monarch Naser al-Din Shah was one of the first local photographers and an active promoter of photography.³

Its introduction coincided with modernization and reform processes, which emerged top-down from within the states and their elites. In the Ottoman Empire, the period of *Tanzimat* (New Ordering) reforms started with an edict in 1839, which led to the acceptance of a constitution in 1876, and continued in agendas of modernization and nationalism until World War I (1914–18). Despite European entanglements, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Iran retained their sovereignty as Muslim-ruled states, which differs from the official colonization of other regions during the nineteenth-century. After the fall of the Mughal Empire (1526–1857), India was ruled by the British Empire; France took a large part of the Maghreb from the Ottoman Empire from the 1830s; Central Asia and the South Caucasus were absorbed by tsarist Russia piece by piece in the course of the nineteenth century.

Hence focusing this volume on the Near and Middle East during the period of reform and modernization processes provides also a regional, historical, and cultural frame for what can be conceptualized as local photography and an “indigenous lens.”

LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

To assume universalism in regard to photography and photo history would ignore that both are historical products. The ways of seeing through the camera, as well as the understanding and interpretation of the photograph and its social context, much like other visual media, would vary by place and time and likewise within the nineteenth century. Senses of vision and forms of representation are historically constructed, and the themes and the usage of photographs relate to social and cultural norms, which may differ from place to place. Photography, like any representational medium, may construct identities. Photographic practices could be heterogeneous and could take on a local flavor, adaptation or hybridization, like modernity itself, which photography was a part of, if one accepts that modernity produced different versions that were specific in particular regions.⁴ The well-known discussion of “global versus local” could frame an enquiry of nineteenth-century photography, yet the connection between the global and local was not as well entrenched in the years of early

photography as it is now, and as a binary it poses its own problems. If “global” signifies contemporary art and is to be differentiated from both modern art and world art,⁵ the framing would be even less useful for the period under discussion.

While the question of local characteristics has a global relevance, there is a marked “asymmetry” in that scholarship posed this to non-European photography but not to European countries or the countries that invented and defined early photography, France and Britain.⁶ Photographers, such as Eugène Atget (1857–1927), August Sander (1876–1964), and Heinrich Zille (1858–1929),⁷ could be seen as an “indigenous lens” of France, Germany, and Berlin respectively, and certainly, their oeuvres point to particularities of their environment and culture. Still, scholars seem less concerned in creating a discourse of the “indigenous lens” of France or what defined a French local photography versus a German one, perhaps because the daguerreotype, the carte-de-visite, and the cinematic camera were all cultural products of France, so its hegemony over early photography is taken for granted. Yet in the United States, nineteenth-century national rhetoric had early on appropriated photography and the daguerrotype as “American,”⁸ while from other perspectives, American photography—though seen as an integral part of the global history of photography—has frequently been perceived as a tradition with specific characteristics in its own cultural and social contexts.⁹

For the present volume, the question is how the new medium photography was received, interpreted, developed, produced, and used outside Europe and North America. It has been probed particularly in photo histories of East and Southeast Asia. Photography in Japan has been treated often as a subject, such as by Heinz Spielmann (1984) and by Chihiro Minato (1998) whose chapter is the only one in Michel Frizot’s history of photography to address a local photographic tradition, separated from the thematic narrative. Surely Japan, by language and culture, is perceived as an entity that invites a singular treatment whatever the subject—something that could be said of other local and cultural framings as well. Yet there were specific photographic practices more prominent in Japan than elsewhere. Hand coloring, used also in European photography, was artistically much more important and was performed in more detail in nineteenth-century photography in Japan. Its themes and aesthetics have been related to the Japanese tradition of color woodprints and watercolor painting. The first photographer to use it seems to have been the Italian Felice Beato (1832–1909) who lived in Japan (1863–84) for twenty years. His work would provide an example of an “indigenous lens” using native traditions but not being produced by a native of the country. Recently *Local Culture/Global Photography* in nineteenth and twentieth-century East and Southeast Asia has been discussed (2013),¹⁰ and Luke Gartlan and Roberta Wue (2017) have addressed how in Japan and China the studio functioned as a place of cultural exchange between sitter and photographer, thus crossing boundaries of global and local visualities.

For early photography in India, though part of the British Empire, Judith Gutman (1982) has made strong claims for local characteristics and a relation to painting traditions. According to her, late nineteenth-century painted photographs represent a new expression of Indian imagery. Various techniques and work steps were needed in order to turn a mere photograph into the desired final product, the “picture.” With the application of strikingly bright opaque water colors, the painted photographs look spectacular and very different from colored photographs produced in Europe or other places during the time.¹¹ Christopher Pinney pointed out in *Camera Indica* (1998) that this practice actually changed the nature and idea of photography and resulted in a hybrid genre, but warns of overgeneralization and essentialization of an alterity of Indian photography. A binary of Indian versus European photographic tradition would not be plausible because of mixed clientele and audiences in the studios.¹²

SCHOLARSHIP ON PHOTO HISTORY OF THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

The discourse of photo history used to remain centered on European and North American, or “Western” photography, even when looking to regions outside of Europe. It presented European and American photographers as pioneers, introducing, producing, and teaching photography in Asia, Africa and other places of the world. The countries where photography was invented were colonial powers, and photographs became instruments of colonialism and control that could codify, possess, and determine knowledge, such as those of India by Samuel Bourne (1834–1912). When photo history, like many other disciplines and subfields, was influenced by postcolonial debates and Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* (1978), a vested interest rose in colonial photography along with an Orientalist gaze. Scholars discussed how photographers chose motifs, presented and represented people and places in ways that gave reason to colonial rule over populations shown as uncivilized and reliant on Europe.¹³ Among the problematic aspects of this perspective is that it places frames of ideology around genuine curiosity and individual views of photographers; the Near and Middle East was never directly colonized; and it still foregrounds a Eurocentric point of view.¹⁴

The notion of an “indigenous lens” attempted to break with this dominance. It can be traced among local historians whose interest predated the postcolonial and Orientalism debate, claiming a share in global photo history and bringing attention to the fact that in many countries photography developed locally very soon after its official announcement in France. Scholarly interest started in the countries of the Near and Middle East themselves, first in historical studies in the 1960s. Scholars used photography as a source and discovered its representational aspects, while it took some time for the material and subject to arrive in photo history. Locating pho-

tographers who were not Europeans or migrants integrated into local society provided an alternative history, possibly more related to local visual traditions and more distant from European ones and Orientalism. When it was discussed in scholarship that local photography had developed very early outside Europe, the colonial photographers were not phased out but balanced with an “indigenous lens” within the existing narrative of photo history.¹⁵

Some of these initial efforts were made by Turkish scholars.¹⁶ In 1966, Perihan Kuturman raised awareness to “Pioneers of Turkish Photography 1858–1920,” which was also published in Turkish (1968). Engin Özendes, who had been researching photography in Turkey since the 1970s and was the publisher and editor of the magazine *Yeni Fotoğraf* (New Photo), wrote *Photography in Turkey (1842–1936)* (1981) and a wider, more comprehensive historical survey, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1919* (1987). In the 1980s articles by William Allen (1984) and Nurhan Atasoy (1988) were generating discussions of the albums of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) that had been presented to Great Britain and the United States during the 1890s, followed by Muhammad Isa Waley (1988, 1991). Though emphasis on these particular photographers and albums have skewed perceptions on Ottoman photography,¹⁷ these publications have laid the groundwork for later scholars’ writing on photography in the Ottoman Empire.

Some general information on early photography in the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire was included in the initial historical writings on Ottoman photography. The 1990s were a turning point for scholarship on Ottoman-Arab photography, which started to flourish by the first decade of the twenty-first century. Some publications had used photography as a local history, such as Fouad Debbas, who in *Beyrouth, notre mémoire* (1986), focused also on postcards, while later in *Des photographes à Beyrouth 1840–1918* (2001), he made an effort toward local photo history. William Facey and Gillian Grant’s *Saudi Arabia by the First Photographers* (1996) features the work of the pioneering Ottoman-Egyptian photographer Muhammad Sadiq Bey (1832–1902) whose *al-Rihlat al-Hijaziyyah* was later reprinted with an introduction by Muhammad Hammam Fikri (1999). Claude Sui dealt with Muhammad Sadiq Bey’s photography in an exhibition of nineteenth-century images of pilgrimage places in Arabia and Palestine, shown in 2006 at the Reiss-Engelhorn Museums in Mannheim, Germany.¹⁸ Research has widened thanks to the Arab Image Foundation, established in 1997, and the Fouad Debbas Collection, in 2001, both in Beirut, Lebanon. While early photography in Iraq remains less exposed, it is now much more visible in the Levant. By the early 2000s, pioneering articles were being published by Issam Nassar, and Badr El-Hage, and now *The Arab Image* by Stephen Sheehi (2016) provides a broad survey and social history of local photography by Arab and Armenian photographers in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹

Qajar-era photography in Iran used to be much less known and has found treatment by fewer scholars and publications. While the study of Qajar history was not a

prime concern during the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–79), it was also affected by the ruptures of the Iranian Revolution (1977–79) and the subsequent long war with Iraq (1980–88) at the time when the photo history of the Ottoman Empire was gaining speed. Significantly, one of the first publications on a Qajar-era photographer, written by the Iranian scholar Mohammad ‘Asemi (1975), dealt with photographs by the German photographer Ernst Höltzer (1835–1911) who had settled in Esfahan and married an Iranian Armenian.²⁰ Toward the end of the Pahlavi period and after the revolution, restrictions on the enormous holdings of nineteenth-century photographs made by both Iranians and Europeans in the archives of the Golestan Palace in Tehran loosened. They were made visible for the first time by Badri Ataba’i’s *Fehrest-e Albumha-ye Ketabkhaneh-ye Saltanati* (Catalogue of the Albums of the Royal Library, 1978). Soon thereafter major articles on Qajar photography were written by the Iranian scholars Iraj Afshar, Chahryar Adle and Yahya Zoka’, and the North American scholar Donna Stein, all published in 1983 and still a backbone of Iranian photo history. In 1986 the magazine ‘Aks (Photograph) which featured articles on Iranian photography, was inaugurated.²¹ In 1991, works of the celebrated Iranian-Armenian photographer Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851–1933) were shown in two exhibitions at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and the Sackler Gallery in Washington DC.²² Within a decade, the latter returned to this photographer with a show on *Sevruguin and the Persian Image* accompanied by a catalogue with contributions by scholars on Qajar photography, including Reza Sheikh and Ali Behdad (1999).²³ By then Zoka’ had published the first historical survey on Qajar photography, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi va ‘akkasan-e pishgam dar Iran* (The History of Photography and Pioneering Photographers in Iran, 1977). Iranian interest started focusing on photography in other important cities besides the capital Tehran. Mansur Sane’ published *Paydayesh-i ‘akkasi dar Shiraz* (The Discovery of Photography in Shiraz, 1991)²⁴ and Parisa Damandan Nafisi, *Chehrehnegaran-e Esfahan: gusheh’i az tarikh-e ‘akkasi-ye Iran* (The Portraitists of Isfahan: A View of the History of Photography, 1999) on a family of photographers²⁵. The photohistorian Mohammadreza Tahmasbpour presented the first monograph (2002) solely on an Iranian photographer, the monarch Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–96). By now, interest in Qajar-era photography has reached a broad audience in Iran, as indicated by the Persian documentary film *Khaterat ruy-e shisheh* (Memories on Glass), involving the Iranian scholars Adle, Sattari, and Tahmasbpour, shot by Mehrdad Zahedian and produced in 2004 in collaboration with Iranian state television.²⁶ Carmen Pérez González discussed in *Local Portraiture: Through the Lens of the 19th Century Photographers* (2012) specific formal and thematic characteristics of local photography in Iran. A thematic issue of the journal *History of Photography* (2013), edited by Perez Gonzalez and Sheikh, made the significance of early photography in Iran manifest to international scholarship and claimed for it a specific position within the photo history of the Near and Middle East.²⁷ Now Mahdokht Abolfathi (2015) offered a

photo history based on written archival sources and Staci Scheiwiller (2017) discussed issues of gender in Qajar photography.

LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND “INDIGENOUS LENSES” IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The fascination with an “indigenous lens” includes the possibility of opening up avenues of understanding that are sensitive to local visual traditions and functions of representational media. Esra Akcan notes in this volume that Istanbul’s topography along the shore of the Bosphorus invited a photographic gaze that depicts a city of panoramic views. When Muhammad Sadiq Bey travelled the Arabian Peninsula, he used locally available means, such as wooden screens as a background instead of painted canvases, as observed by Sui in this volume. Characteristics that relate to traditions in visual arts, in social norms and culture such as poses and postures chosen for representational images may constitute another aspect.

A relation to local visual traditions in book illustration and murals has been particularly argued for Iran. Many photographs from Iran depict persons kneeling on the floor (Figs. 9–10 on p. 312, and Figs. 2–3 on pp. 197, 199). This is a posture of local cultural practice, found in earlier and contemporaneous painting. The photographs do not just record it, but use it as part of a representational strategy of photographer and sitter (a term inclined to European practice while here it is actually a “kneeler”), a pose chosen over the pose of sitting on a chair or standing close to a table. That the latter two poses would be conceived as European and modern seems to be indicated by the observation that they are most often used in photographs of members of the court, though surely in daily and private life, they would also kneel and sit on the floor,²⁸ while in portraits of poets and clerics (Figs. 2, 8, 10 on pp. 197, 209, 213), the kneeling pose is more often seen.²⁹ In a group photograph of five children, they are seated on a bench in a reclining pose (Fig. 1) that has parallels to other photographs³⁰ and would seem to add a posture with a humorous flair and an air of informality to the repertoire of sitting poses in Iranian culture and European photography. The significance of cultural codes would be indicated by specific attributes in portrait photography in Iran, which have been related to the metaphorical imagery of Persian poetry, such as men holding flowers and groups placed at water pools.³¹

Showing a dignitary seated frontally and flanked by two standing persons of lesser rank in nearly side- or three-quarter views, such as in Muhammad Sadiq Bey’s portrait of Sharif Shaqat Pasha, guardian of the prophet’s mosque in Medina, with two eunuch assistants (Fig. 3 on p. 120) might not follow a scheme of European photography but reflect local social norms and ceremonies. The seated figure places his hands openly on his knees, while the two attendants keep their arms to the body,



— 1: Unknown photographer, children, albumen print, Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

hands together and covered by their sleeve ends. Although the Ottoman-Egyptian photographer portrayed the dignitary also in other ways, this representation of a seated person flanked by two standing attendants may resonate with a pictorial tradition of authority. The question remains whether the use of specific local poses should be seen as a characteristic of local photography or as a feature of the universal ability of photography to document, depict, and represent human beings in their variety and individuality.

When looking at how photograph albums were arranged and the types of images that were placed within, the photograph album seems to differ in Iran from other places in the world. Nabipour and Sheikh, in this volume, compare them with the Persian tradition of *muraqqaʿ* albums, which collect, arrange and reframe drawings, paintings, and calligraphy.³² As Carmen Pérez González demonstrates in this volume, photographs with poetry written on them constitute a specific practice in Iran.³³ While attaching writing, i.e., inscriptions, to objects of art and architecture, both as message and embellishment, is a widespread practice in premodern traditions of Islamic art, the use of poetry in them is seen more specifically in the Persian-speaking or Persianate regions since the seventeenth and particularly in the nineteenth

century.³⁴ An overlay of poetic calligraphy and painted imagery was practiced by the Qajar artist Esma'il Jalayer (c. 1860).³⁵ Arranging photographs in albums and writing on photographs are manipulations after the creation of the photograph itself, but may be seen as elements of functions and practices of local photography. It would be interesting to compare this treatment with similar practices in China.³⁶ Yet it would be difficult to argue that this was part of constructing a visual identity. Only since the twentieth century and in the context of a global art market, may writing in Arabic letters on works of art also be intended as a cultural signifier.³⁷

Another aspect of local photography is what it does not show. Photographs may be distant from orientalizing poses and atmospheres, such as the exotic, melodramatic, overly sensual, or erotic staging of figures, unless such clichés were appropriated. Photography for a local audience had to meet local social and cultural norms. Sattari and Mohammadi Nameghi observe in this volume that photographs of women are absent from the photographic gaze of local photographers in Iran, unless they appear as individual persons in private photography, such as the photographs of women from the family and household of Naser al-Din Shah. Even then, depictions that might be understood to include an element of eroticism are rare and not intended for an outside audience.³⁸

One may wonder whether the term “indigenous lens” is more useful than “vernacular,” “local,” or “autochthonous” photography, as the term carries the semantic baggage of “indigenous” as a colonialist category. Among the dangers of the notion of an “indigenous lens” is that it easily falls victim to formulaic binaries of categories, such as global versus local, and to an inverted othering when it is applied as an exclusive category of geography, nation, or culture. To be an actor of local photography or to produce photography with characteristics or within contexts seen in one locality but not in other places of the world, it is not necessary to be a native of the country. Höltzer was from Germany but settled in Iran, and Sevruguin’s family lived in Georgia but he grew up in Iran. Both married an Iranian Armenian and worked and died in the country. Would these photographers remain foreigners, photographing Iran as the Other, or would they have assimilated so that their photographs, similar to those of the Italian Beato in Japan mentioned above, might reflect local photographic practices and visual traditions as well? In this volume, Scheiwiller’s essay on Sevruguin and Baleva’s contribution on photographic portraits in the Ottoman Balkans both situate the portraits and the photographer as part of a local photo-historical discourse. Both contest the boundaries in terms of geography, culture, religion, and ethnicity when thinking of an early indigenous lens in the Near and Middle East.

A binary of a local or “indigenous lens” versus a global or European one would become problematic, when juxtaposing one supposed lens with the other and assuming that each lens will have its own specific characteristics that differ from the other; if one lens is judged more valuable and interesting than the other; and if ignoring the

hybridity of a local lens adopting European modes and of a European one adopting local views. The question cannot be about formulaic ways to ascribe photographs to being taken by insiders or outsiders. Despite efforts to make photography one's own, the connection to European practices is undeniable. European photographers trained native ones in the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran; photography manuals were translated into Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, or Persian from the original language (usually French); techniques, materials, and chemicals were imported from European manufacturers; and some photographers born and raised in the country went to study photography in Europe, such as the Iranian 'Abdollah Mirza, discussed by Helbig in this volume, who was trained in Salzburg, Austria. Even though local photographic practices could make the art of photography unique in some places, an aura of authenticity or an essentialized practice of photography would not be plausible. If there is an Ottoman or Qajar photography, the nature of their practices is hybridized.

The interest in local photography and an "indigenous lens," as noted above, evolved at a certain point in photo historiography and as a notion that it is necessary to include local aspects for a balanced view on photo history in the Near and Middle East. The study of an "indigenous lens" is not so much about how those in the past practiced photography, but relates to present concerns and to how scholars want to understand, categorize, and interpret those practices and images, that is, to the way discourse is written, as Sandra Matthews has pointed out (2013), and Eldem, Scheiwiller, and Stein have noted in this volume. Since the writing of photohistory as well as its collecting practices have mainly been Eurocentric, similar approaches to and understanding of the material would also mimic the ways photography in Europe and North America has been codified and theorized. While seeing an artwork as "Islamic" is a European idea of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, seeing it as "Iranian," "Arab," "Turkish" became a twentieth- and twenty-first-century approach of artists and scholars within the modern states established with the rise of Atatürk (r. 1923–38) and Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925–41).³⁹

It may not be accidental that most of the examples cited here in favor of the relevance of seeking a local photography, or "indigenous lens," relate to photography in Iran. Scholarship on Iran, and particularly inside Iran, fitting a claim of cultural continuity across thousands of years, often favors the idea that the adoption of modernity during the nineteenth century, including techniques and forms of European visual media, was more deliberately conscious and selective in Iran than in other places of the Near and Middle East. While there may be something to support this idea and a specific position of early photography in Iran, placing the significance of local artistic traditions above European models remains debatable.⁴⁰

If photography prior to the twentieth century was not driven by a genuine concern to create an "indigenous lens" in the sense of constructing a specific identity, "local practice" and "identity" were not synonymous. Ottoman and Qajar subjects



— 2: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, Anis al-Dowleh, c. 1871, albumen print, Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

were aware of their identities and sought to portray and represent various parts of themselves in their photographs, as well as that they were cognizant of European and Orientalist attitudes. The ambiguities of interpretation are illustrated in the photograph by Nasir al-Din Shah of his *sigheh*, or temporary wife, Anis al-Dowleh (1842–97) reclining on a sofa (Fig. 2). It has been speculated that she poses, in an adoption of European Orientalist images, as an odalisque, while it also has been said that this cannot be substantiated by a more numerous body of photographic evidence and must be an exception or rejected.⁴¹ An alternative explanation might be drawn from the parallel to the pose of reclining figures mentioned above (Fig. 1), thus noting, besides visual tradition and identity construction, a creative and artistic aspect.

CONCLUSION

It is fascinating to observe how scholarly literature on the photo history of the Near and Middle East has evolved during the past fifty years from a history of photography of European travelers and migrants into a discussion that includes local scholars, pays attention to local actors, agendas, and previously scarcely known territories of early photography, and is critically aware of the photo historian's perspective. There is still a need for positioning practices outside of Europe and North America within a historical genealogy of modernism, so as to correct its Eurocentrist perspective which denied other regions' practices a place within historiography.⁴² If history of photography is a global discipline,⁴³ it is important to insert local photography, including the regions of the Near and Middle East.

Within photo history, the "indigenous lens" is a call to look for local traditions in photography as a global phenomenon—in this volume, in the regions of the Near and Middle East. This call is also apparent when noticing how contemporary art in the Near and Middle East perceives local photo traditions as own visual and historic heritages hence codifying and defining them. Photographers and photo artists refer in their works to nineteenth-century photography, such as the Iranians Bahman Jalali (1944–2010), Shadi Ghadirian (b. 1974), Azadeh Akhlaghi (b. 1978),⁴⁴ and Tahmineh Monzavi (b. 1988). Jalali, who was also a photo historian and collector of early photography, used in his series "Images of Imagination" (2000–2008) magnified details from photographs of the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, overlaying them with Persian writing in Arabic letters and broad brushstrokes or painted flowers in red and related colors (book cover and Fig. 3). When looking at the photographic traditions of the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran, it seems possible that actually these two have more in common with each other historically, visually, and motif-wise than their European counterparts, thus stressing that, regionally, photography adapted to its environs more than the environs adopted a European mode of representing and seeing. The "indigenous lens" becomes a moot point when it is used as an exclusive category essentialized as Own Self or Other, when observations are turned into a formula or strategy that is not carefully and critically applied to a larger body of photographs, or when it attempts to ignore the inevitable impact of European and North American photography.

Overall, the goal of this anthology is to rupture the categories of "lenses" that have become part of discourse on nineteenth-century photography in the Near and Middle East. It provides a wide spectrum of scholarship, from presentations of available archival material and revisionist histories to critical methodologies of how to deal with local aspects of photography. Discussing an "indigenous lens" is useful to generate questions and identify photographic practices and ways of seeing that related to local rather than European or global phenomena. It is not about who was a



— 3: Unknown photographer, women playing music, c. 1860s–80s, collection of Bahman Jalali.

native photographer or what was more authentic in representing people, cities, landscapes in a particular region, but a search for various local perceptions, gazes, and practices that provide many views and many interpretations of global photography in the nineteenth century.

NOTES

See the general bibliography for authors and scholarly works mentioned in the main text only. The authors wish to thank Noit Banai (Vienna), Edhem Eldem (Istanbul), Bettina Gockel (Zurich), Friedrich Tietjen (Berlin), and Stephen Sheehi (Williamsburg, VA) for comments and input on parts of this text.

- 1 Perez, *Focus East*, 74–80.
- 2 For convenient surveys of the period and the different countries, see Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 571–679; Hodgson, *Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times*, 163–332; Kreiser, *Der Osmanische Staat*, 36–46; Schölch, “Der arabische Osten.”
- 3 On Islamic religious-legal discussions of photography in the Ottoman Empire, see Şeker, *Fotografie im Osmanischen Reich*. In Iran, a courtier of Naser al-Din Shah commissioned the manuscript of the *Kitab-e ‘aksiye hashriye*, which advocated photography based on religious arguments and was printed in Tehran in 1889, see the Persian text in Tahami/Jalali (eds),

- Ganj-e paida* and Pulfer, (Selbst-)Repräsentation. On Naser al-Din Shah as photographer, see Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*.
- 4 Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*; Appadurai, "The Production of Locality," in idem, *Modernity at Large*.
 - 5 Belting, "Contemporary Art as Global Art."
 - 6 "Asymmetry" as noted by Mathews, "Local Culture/Global Photography," referring to Christopher Pinney and Aveek Sen.
 - 7 Zille is more commonly known for his oeuvre of paintings and prints, but he was also an amateur photographer; von Brauchitsch, *Kleine Geschichte*, 70 counts him among early social documentary photographers.
 - 8 Trachtenberg, "Daguerrotype and Antebellum America."
 - 9 As expressed in literary and essayistic views on modern photography by Susan Sontag, *On Photography*. While Jonathan Green, *American Photography*, looked to photographers after 1945, Martha A. Sandweiss, *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, extended the theme into early photography, and Mike Orvell, *American Photography*, attempted a treatment "in relation to the larger cultural history of America" (ibid., 17). Bettina Gockel with Patrizia Munforte (eds.), *American Photography*, probed the question of what artistic, social and political aspects turned the work of American photographers with an international impact also into American photography.
 - 10 On Beato, see Perez, *Focus East*, 131. Before he came to Japan, he had been collaborating with the Orientalist photographer James Robertson (1813–88) in Constantinople, on Crimea, and in India. – On *Local/Global*, see the thematic issue of the journal *Trans Asia Photography Review*, see Matthews (ed.) and her "Editor's Introduction."
 - 11 Gutmann, *Through Indian Eyes*, 3–5; 106–108, 114.
 - 12 Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 82, 95–96.
 - 13 For example, Alloula, *Colonial Harem* (1986); Nochlin, "Imaginary Orient" (1983); Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock* (1991).
 - 14 While Micklewright, *Victorian Traveller* and "Orientalism and Photography," looking to album collections, offers a more complicated and shifting reading of European constructions of both the Orient and their own identities. See also Brusius, "Royal Photography," 65.
 - 15 See for example Woodward, "Photographic Practice," and Gutman, *Through Indian Eyes*, 3–5.
 - 16 Cf. Landau, "Some Comments."
 - 17 See Eldem in this volume.
 - 18 See in Wiczorek/Sui (eds.), *Ins Heilige Land*.
 - 19 See bibliography.
 - 20 See also Farzam, *Hazar jelveh*, and on Hölzter, Scarce, "Isfahan in camera."
 - 21 Sattari, "Photography in Iran," 13.
 - 22 In Tehran, *The Armenians of Iran as Seen through the Camera*, and in Washington, *Antoine Sevruguin: Photographs of Iran*; Tatjarian/Sevrugian, "On the Photographic Oeuvre," 55–57.
 - 23 Bohrer (ed.), *Sevruguin*.
 - 24 Later followed by Saneʿ, *Beh yad-e Shiraz* (2003).
 - 25 More recently published in different English editions, Nafisi, *Portrait photographs* (2004) and Nafisi, *Esfahan* (2012).
 - 26 With channel 4 of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). Thanks from Markus Ritter to Farhad Varahram of Cinepersicus/Vienna for making this documentary available in 2011. A part of it, on the early history of film making in Iran, was also released separately as *Khalqeh-ha-ye gom-shodeh* (The Lost Reels, 2004).

- 27 Sheikh/Pérez González, "Editorial," 3.
- 28 Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 112, states that the kneeling posture is most often seen in early Iranian photography and posits, *ibid.*, 120, an influence of Persian painting.
- 29 Pulfer, (Selbst-)Repräsentation schiitischer Geistlicher, 46, discussing a series of portraits of Shiite clerics, or *rouhaniyan*, 'olama, interpreted the use of the kneeling pose as a representational strategy.
- 30 Shown in the last quarter of Zahedian, *Khaterat*.
- 31 Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 123–124; Jalali in David, "Interview," 28–29; cf. Brusius, "Royal Photography," 68.
- 32 See also Brusius, "Royal Photography," 60, 68, 70.
- 33 Cf. *ibid.*, 70–71.
- 34 Ritter, "Monumental Epigraphy," 29–30; O'Kane, *Appearance of Persian*, 156.
- 35 Raby, *Qajar Portraits*, 98, no. 138.
- 36 Kent, "Inscribed Photographic Portraits," relates inscriptions on photos in China to local art traditions.
- 37 Such as Arabic calligraphy by the Tunesian artist Nja Mahdaoui commissioned in 2000 for the exterior design of planes of the Gulf Air company based in Bahrain.
- 38 Cf. above and note 41. See also Scheiwiller, *Liminalities*.
- 39 Cf. Blair/Bloom, "Mirage."
- 40 Such as the suggestion that there was an early original and experimental phase in Iranian photography, only later overrun by European models, see Tahmasbpour in this volume and in Zahedian, *Khaterat*. Cf. the suggestion of an "'innocent' modernism," i.e., without a burden of European pictorial tradition from painting, by Shaw, "Ottoman Photography."
- 41 Behdad, "Power-Ful Art," 146, pl. 3, stating: "Her bored gaze, suggestive of the monotony of harem life, invites the (male) viewer to fantasize about an erotic encounter with her." Here, understanding would be in the eye of the beholder. This image was not for a European audience and Naser al-Din Shah's photos of his family and harem were strictly private. Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 126–127 states that in all other photos, which Naser al-Din Shah took of his women, they sit on a European chair, and she compares photos of half-exposed women to a tradition in Qajar painting (also *ibid.*, 163–164). See also Scheiwiller, *Mirrors with Memories*, 121, and Mohammadi Nameghi/Pérez González, "From Sitters to Photographers," 65–66.
- 42 As noted by Araeen, "Art and Postcolonial Society."
- 43 Elkins' "Art History as Global Discipline."
- 44 On the oeuvre of Jalali and Ghadirian, see Jalali/David, *Jalali*, and Mohajer/Nadjmabadi/Shayegan, *Photographie iranienne*, respectively; for a discussion, Scheiwiller, *Mirror of Memories*. On Akhlagi, see Rameder, Azadeh Akhlaghi's Photograph Series.

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- 1: Jalali/Tahami, eds., *Visible Treasures*, 52–53.
- 2: Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, fig. 94.
- 3: Jalali/David, eds., *Bahman Jalali*, 34.

THE SEARCH FOR AN OTTOMAN VERNACULAR
PHOTOGRAPHY

Scholarly knowledge of Ottoman photography is rich, but generally speaking, lacks variety and scope. Particularly absent from the literature is vernacular, or indigenous, photography,¹ especially in the provinces where the work and archives of scores of photographers have been lost, mostly as a result of a decade of political and social turmoil from the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) to the Great War (WWI, 1914–1918) and to the nationalist upheaval that followed (1919–1922). A particularly meaningful example is that of the Dildilian Brothers (1872–1923), active in Sivas, Merzifon, and Samsun, who survived the genocide of 1915, and eventually found refuge in Europe and the United States. Recent work conducted on this particular family has revealed the existence of a wealth of documentation, from photographs to archival material.² Knowing that the Dildilian studio was just one of some 140 provincial studios listed in the *Annuaire oriental* commercial directory of 1914,³ the conclusion one can draw from this particular example is rather frightening: If this rich material has survived the tragic circumstances of war, genocide, and exile, one can only begin to imagine what has happened to heaps of documents belonging to the rest of the studios—almost exclusively Armenian and Greek; probably they have vanished forever.

It would be incorrect, however, to think that the imbalance between the Ottoman capital of Istanbul and the provinces was the only factor marginalizing vernacular photography. A very similar situation can be observed with respect to the work of the photographers of Istanbul. In this context, however, the problem has little in common with the tragic losses of provincial photography. Rather, what is at stake is a very strong distortion in favor of two very particular targets of the capital's photographic production, European consumers and the Ottoman elite, from the palace down to some of the most prominent and prosperous families of the time. The disturbing aspect of this distortion, however, is that it has less to do with a physical loss of documentation than with a bias inherent to the scholarship and literature on the topic.

The few scholars who have worked more or less systematically on photography in the Ottoman Empire in general, and in Istanbul in particular, have done so on the

basis of existing collections, private and public; yet one must note that this is precisely where the bias is most deeply rooted. Public collections are rare, and the few examples that come to mind are generally closely connected to a state-centered process of documentation and monitoring. A very typical example is that of the so-called Abdülhamid or Yıldız albums, consisting of over 33,000 images concentrated at Yıldız Palace under Abdülhamid II's reign (r. 1876–1909). This collection has (too) often been studied and mentioned, especially within the limited and very specific scope of the selection of 51 albums that were sent to Washington, D.C. and London to propagate a positive image of the empire and its achievements. This has resulted in a profusion of commentaries on how the autocratic Abdülhamid used photography to promote his own agenda.⁴ Despite the fact that most of the photographers commissioned for this task were Ottoman subjects, it seems difficult to label as “vernacular” such a systematic effort at documenting the empire for a North American or European audience, and at best, to satisfy the sovereign's own fascination with images as a means of documentation and control.

The bias inherent to private collections is even stronger. Collectors have generally given priority to rarity or even uniqueness, determined by the material form of photographs, their date, their author, the sitter, or the context and circumstances. As a natural consequence of these preferences, private collections tend to reproduce a very distorted image of the actual photographic output with an overrepresentation of early items over the later, of pioneers over ordinary craftsmen, of princes over paupers, of signed and dedicated portraits over ordinary shots, and of prestigious leather-bound albums over anonymous family scrapbooks. In short, private collections are most likely to give a very selective vision of a much wider phenomenon, strongly skewed by personal choice, fashion, and market value. The result is a very low level of representation and a consequential lack of coherence. With the exception of particular efforts at reconstituting the work of some of the early artists of the trade or of exhausting certain thematic subjects, very little of the material in such collections allows for the constitution of proper and consistent series. If anything, this should remind one of the fact that collections are not archives, and that any study based on such material is bound to reflect and to reproduce its biases and inconsistencies.

No wonder, then, that most of the work published to this day on photography in the Ottoman Empire has to do with some of the great names of the trade, such as James Robertson (1813–1888), Abdullah Frères: Vitche (1820–1902); Hovsep (1830–1908); Kevork (1830–1918), Pascal Sébah (1823–1886), Boghos Tarkouljian (1882–1936), or Guillaume Berggren (1835–1920). It also tends to deal with the “golden age” of photography, from daguerreotypes to albumen prints, with the high end of portrait photography, with certain categories of land- and cityscapes, and with a number of themes and genres, from Orientalism to anthropology and from technology to imperial

image-making.⁵ There is little doubt that most of these works have played a crucial role in opening up a rich and promising field to research and in identifying the milestones of a cultural process of great importance. That being said, it is also true that we have reached a rather frustrating point of saturation with respect to the likely impact and incidence of any new additions to this well-established and well-studied corpus. What will the field gain from finding yet another portrait of an imperial prince, from unearthing two more albums in the style of the Abdülhamid ones, or from discovering an unknown vista of one of the imperial palaces along the Bosphorus?

More importantly, even when one knows that these photographs were taken by “local” photographers or by their foreign colleagues who had gone native after decades of practice in the empire, could one claim that these over-studied images really fall within the category of “vernacular photography?” The sovereigns, princes, bureaucrats, and diplomats, as well as their wives and children, who grace these *cartes de visite* and *boudoir* format photographs almost always posed in ways and contexts that could hardly be differentiated from their European equivalents. Of course, the fezzes and clothing they wore did give them an inimitable local touch that set them apart from their European counterparts, but past that thin surface, there is very little that can be identified as truly vernacular. European norms and conventions dominate these images through pose, attitude, setting, backdrop, and accessory. True, one can always discern points of detail that betray a “local” dimension of some significance, but in most cases, it is rather clear that Ottoman portraiture emulated a well-established European model with little, if any, desire to stray from it.

PROBLEMS OF METHOD

If there is any major particularity of Ottoman photography, it may well be that contrary to its European equivalent, it did not exhibit any real continuity with former pictorial and representational forms and traditions. In Europe and North America, both portrait and landscape painting provided the grounds for a rather smooth transition to photography, which maintained and occasionally developed some of the most basic artistic conventions that had preceded it. This may explain why painting rapidly developed new forms of expression that were partly triggered by this new technology but also by the need to challenge and to transcend it by depicting what could not be rendered through photography. In the Ottoman case, however, the irruption of the photographic gaze was almost simultaneous with the introduction of European painting, to the point that the latter for some time tended to rely on the former for the development of its own means of expression and representation. This rootlessness of Ottoman photography has been labeled as “innocent,” due to the fact that it lacked the same dependence on previously existing genres as in Europe.⁶

This term “innocent” is misleading, however.⁷ While discontinuity with, rather than the absence of, previous representational genres is certainly a significant factor in defining Ottoman photography, it does not necessarily imply that photographers and sitters were unaware of, and oblivious to, conventions that had already developed in Europe. Claims to that effect prove to be largely unsubstantiated.⁸ That many of the pioneering studios were established and run by foreigners, that they were followed by non-Muslim subjects generally trained and formed *alla franca*, and that the great majority of sitters belonged to the upper crust of a society undergoing a systematic transformation along European norms is sufficient reason to question seriously the “innocence” of early Ottoman photography. Some of the well-known portraits taken by Abdullah Frères or Pascal Sébah in the 1850s and 1860s are extremely similar to those produced by Parisian or other European studios of the time. A good example is that of the many portraits of the Algerian Amir ‘Abdelkader (1808–1883), among which the one taken by Abdullah Frères in Istanbul in 1865,⁹ is very similar to those by a number of European photographers, such as Francis Bedford (1816–1894), Gustave Le Gray (1820–1884), Étienne Carjat (1828–1906), André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819–1889), Louis-Jean Delton (1807–1891), and so forth.¹⁰ Strangely, Abdullah Frères’ version is the most stately and formal of all, which probably explains that it should have been much more widely used than the others.

To make matters worse, scholarship on Ottoman photography has so insistently focused on the Orientalist gaze and on its assumed opposite, modernism, that whatever vernacular dimension may have existed has been pushed even further behind the smokescreen formed by these two appealing concepts. Again, for understandable reasons, historians in general, but most particularly those dealing with visual culture and cultural history, have put a great deal of energy into revealing the nature and scope of the “Orientalist gaze” which had reached a new dimension after the invention of photography.¹¹ Almost as important as the Orientalist approach, and often overlapping with it, the notion of modernity exerted yet another powerful attraction in scholarship by offering the possibility of studying the other side of the coin, namely the use of photography as a means of displaying the technical, scientific, and other achievements of the state, but also the adoption by the Ottoman elite itself of a European and often Orientalist gaze on a world of tradition and history.¹² If the Abdülhamid albums provided most of the material needed to reveal this modernist discourse of the time, Osman Hamdi and Victor Marie de Launay’s album *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873* has become a standard feature of any study wishing to depict the complex nature of Ottoman perception and the use of ethnography as a display strategy.¹³

The problem with these particular approaches is not so much that they are wrong, but rather that they are slightly *too* right. Original as they may have been when they were first developed along the breach opened by Edward Said’s celebrated

Orientalism,¹⁴ these arguments have ended up forming a canon in itself that hardly needs to be repeated ad infinitum. However, beyond the “been there, heard that” feeling that now prevails in this field, this particular line of thought is characterized by a strong tendency to use a methodology that heavily relies on visual interpretation with much less concern for a critical assessment of the sources at hand. Typical of this tendency is the fact that images are generally treated with little regard for their actual dissemination and reception, or for the way in which they have been assembled to form a supposedly consistent or homogenous collection. A case in point is the Abdülhamid collection, which has generally been analyzed on the basis of a (very accessible) sample constituted by the contents of the albums preserved at the Library of Congress and the British Library. The fact that this represents about one twentieth of the whole collection, or that the said albums were basically forgotten from their entry into these libraries until their rediscovery in the 1980s, has generally been overshadowed by the interest shown for the images themselves. Even then, no serious attempt has been made to understand how and when this collection had formed or to assess critically the coexistence of commissioned images with a great number of photographs evidently taken from the commercial stocks of some of the major studios of the time. In rather similar fashion, Hamdi and de Launay’s *Costumes populaires* has systematically been studied through its images with little, if any, concern for the nature and origins of the text that accompanied it, for its connection to the broader context of costume displays, or for its distribution and reception.¹⁵

To a large extent, the interpretive potential of this material has been such that it has made it possible to develop ambitious arguments by “reading” a single or just a few evocative images. The advantages of such an approach are obvious: with a solid theoretical background in cultural studies and visual culture, backed by a familiarity with theories of Orientalism, postcolonialism, and subaltern studies, it becomes possible to interpret most of this material with little, if any, need for more conventional linguistic and historical skills.¹⁶ Of course, given the power and omnipresence of Orientalist discourses throughout the period, there are many cases in which this method is foolproof, if only because the whole process is encapsulated within a European discourse from production to consumption. But what safeguards are there against the very frequent risk of over-reading and of the self-proving argument?¹⁷

A case in point is that of the multiple readings to which Pascal Sébah’s photographic production has been subjected, generally with reference to two particular genres. On one hand, his plates in *Costumes populaires* have often been commented on to underline their ethnographic dryness, which served imperial designs of displaying ethnic and religious variety for foreign viewers. On the other, his shots staging local “types”—from whirling dervishes and street vendors to “Turkish ladies”—have long been inventoried among the most typical Orientalist products of the time.¹⁸ And yet, it has also been claimed that some of his street scenes—“community portraits”—

stood clearly apart from Orientalist stereotypes and gave an unexpectedly orderly and modernizing view of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ Obviously, as is often the case, the meaning is in the eyes of the beholder, thus making it possible to read the visual material under consideration in a variety of ways. Yet can this interpretation hold against a more critical assessment of the photographer's oeuvre?



___ 1 and 2: Two very different scenes by the same photographer and with the same models. ___ 1: Pascal Sébah, Arabs from the vicinity of Mecca, c. 1872, Fostin Cotchen collection, New York.

I have recently used side by side two images produced by Pascal Sébah at around the very same time.²⁰ What is striking about them is that they stage the same models—two women and a man—wearing almost identical clothes and defined in very similar fashion as being “Arabs” from the vicinity of Mecca. And yet, the two images are almost diametrically opposed from the perspective of the message they convey. One



— 2: Pascal Sébah, Kabyle man and woman from Harb, near Medina and woman from Jiyaddala, near Mecca, in Hamdy/de Launay, *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873*, part 3, pl. XL.

of them is a typically Orientalist scene, with the three models forced into a naïve pantomime of daily life: the man drinks from an earthen jar gracefully held by the younger woman, while the other woman sits in a pensive pose. Papier-mâché rocks and straw strewn across the floor give a finishing touch to this rustic Arabian scene (fig. 1). The other image is taken from one of the plates of the famous *Costumes populaires* album. The models are unmistakably the same, but their poses and attitudes

have radically changed, as all three are seen side by side, almost standing at attention. The man's costume and the older woman's headgear are different but still in the same "Oriental" style. Instead of the rustic accessories, the image bears the trademark of Sébah's studio: a bare wall, wooden paneling, and a plain carpet (fig. 2). What these two photographs clearly show is that Sébah could easily navigate from one genre to another, adopting a cold ethnographic gaze for an official publication and feeding Orientalist fantasies when it came to selling images to foreigners and tourists. The image of a group posing in front of a kebab shop in Istanbul²¹ in fact represents just one more variation in this wide repertoire of Orientalist representations, with as their common denominator the fact that the entire process, from production and distribution to consumption, was done on European terms. Given this basic observation, any variation in the way in which the "native" dimension is represented remains of marginal, if not cosmetic, incidence. To assume that a more "natural" depiction of a local community is less Orientalist brings about the risk of reducing Orientalism to the level of a mere caricature of its much more complex self.

THE QUESTION OF AGENCY

It seems reasonable to suggest that the distinction between European and/or Orientalist perceptions and a more local/vernacular vision must be sought in the agency behind the processes. The quest for the vernacular must therefore start by attempting to understand whether one can identify some degree of local agency in the making or in the usage of the image. That is precisely how Woodward presented Sébah's "kebab shop" photograph as differing from the Orientalist canon: the photograph, she claims, not only showed the crowd in an orderly fashion and stressing the individuality of the men, but it also displayed what looked like a similar photograph hanging from the wall behind the chef. In other words, the risk of a "wishful interpretation" or over-reading of order and individuality was offset by the "evidence" provided by the local use of a photograph resembling this one. By displaying that photograph, the local shop owner was in a certain sense granting it a label of authenticity.²²

The "kebab shop" is a perfect illustration of the ambiguity of Orientalism when "recycled" by its own target, the Orientals. Even if we accept that the photograph on the wall indeed depicts a similar scene—the quality of the image does not allow for certainty—does the fact that it was appropriated by a local actor exonerate it from Orientalism? One is reminded of the comments by Basiretçi Ali Efendi (1845–1910), owner and editorialist of the daily *Basiret* (Insight), on viewing a shop window in Pera where a photographer had displayed his merchandise. Among the photographs, Ali Efendi had loved the view of the interior of Hagia Sophia but expressed some misgivings about the albums containing "a multitude of portraits, from Mevlevi sheiks

down to ice cream and pudding vendors.” More importantly, he had been scandalized by the presence of “Muslim ladies without their cloaks and veils.”²³ Obviously Ali Efendi was describing the window of one of the major studios of the time, quite possibly Sébah’s. His objection was to a form of “indecent exposure,” of street vendors and dervishes to a certain extent, but especially of Muslim women. But did he not know that the vendors and the women were in fact models impersonating local “types” on photographs designed and staged for the enjoyment of foreign visitors? Was he unaware that the women, in particular, were in fact all non-Muslims? Of course, he knew all that; and so did the government when it gave orders prohibiting photographers from taking pictures of Greek and Armenian women wearing the Muslim veil and cloak “to show Muslim costume under a strange form to Europeans.”²⁴ It was just that the *representation* itself was convincing and abhorrent enough, regardless of its authenticity. It must have been more or less the same for the kebab shop owner, for whom the image of his or another shop, regardless of authenticity, was good enough a representation to be hung on the wall. Such an action did not give him agency any more than it changed the nature and context of the original photograph.

Perhaps the best illustration of the slippery grounds on which Orientalist images navigated in the Ottoman lands is a strange postcard depicting three “women in Turkish costume,” a typical example of Orientalist kitsch but bearing penciled inscriptions by a Muslim woman named Nehar (fig. 3). What is most striking about this item is that the three women on the front have been given names, the one on the right



— 3: An Orientalist scene “appropriated” by an Oriental: A postcard depicting three “Turkish ladies” inscribed with names penciled by a woman named Nehar, undated postcard published by Moïse Israilovitch (MJC), Cengiz Kahraman collection, Istanbul.

sharing hers with the postcard's sender, Nehar. Could it be that contrary to all our expectations, some of these cards used actual Muslim women as their models, and that this was the evidence needed to prove it? The answer is revealed in the text on the back when Nehar, addressing a friend who used to work at a palace, tells her jokingly: "If you miss the way you were at the palace, my dear sister, here is something to remind you of it."²⁵ As usual, the "Turkish ladies" on the postcard were models acting out that particular role; to the Muslim woman who had bought the card, this imaginary scene was convincing and convenient enough to tease a friend by pretending that they were both in the picture.

What these examples demonstrate is that the deflection of the Orientalist gaze by local agency cannot be guessed through images but needs to be documented and properly contextualized. Yet even then, one can hardly speak of an indigenous or vernacular image as long as local agency involves only the usage and possible internalization of the image. To find a local agency capable of modifying the very nature of the image itself would require an explicit intervention on the part of the photographer, of the sitter, or of the commissioner or consumer for whom the image was produced. In a context, in which most photographers emulated European styles, most sitters were either European or members of modernizing elites, and most of the consumers were also Europeans, there was very little space left for vernacular photography as an expression of local choices and identity. In a sense, one could claim that Ottoman vernacular photography is really to be found in the absences: the Muslim women who would not pose, the street photographer whose portraits barely survived beyond a generation, or the thousands of modest photographs that disappeared in the turmoil of war and exile or simply with the passing of time.

Despite all these absences and losses, there are still quite a number of photographs that could certainly be included under the general heading of "vernacular" based on some common features, denoting a conscious desire to mark the image with a local touch that cannot be dismissed as a simple accessory of Orientalism. All it takes is a detail in the setting, one that "speaks out" to the viewer and conveys a message of identity and belonging. Books were a typical way to do so and a practical one too, considering that posing with a book or books was a very common convention of European portrait photography, especially for men. Many Ottoman portraits by the "usual suspects"—Abdullah Frères, Sébah, Berggren, Tarkoulia, Nicolas Andriomenos (1851–1929)—made use of this noble accessory, and one could list quite a number of celebrities who posed with one or several books stacked on a table next to them, from the sultan and imperial princes to some of the grandees of the time.²⁶ Such poses are very frequent, and like other props and furniture, the unidentifiable books on the images are often repeated across poses taken in the same studio. Yet some portraits staging books are striking due to the fact that the books can be identified thanks to inscriptions on the edge.

Not all such portraits are necessarily meaningful; one fails to see why Ömer Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman armies during the Crimean War (1853–1856), would have wanted to pose with one hand on the first volume of Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle's 1861 edition of the *Dictionnaire national*.²⁷ In all likelihood, this was just a volume provided by Abdullah Frères, and the title just happened to be legible due to its size.²⁸ But in some cases, the book's title is too meaningful to be dismissed as an accidental contribution of the photographer. A particularly interesting case is the portrait of Amir 'Abdelkader by Abdullah Frères mentioned above. Probably taken during the amir's visit to Istanbul in 1865, it uses the same setting as the portraits of Sultan Abdülaziz and his son Yusuf İzzeddin Efendi (1857–1916), easily recognizable thanks to the design of the room's wooden paneling.²⁹ Yet contrary to the ornate furniture visible on both these portraits, the amir is sitting next to a small table entirely covered with a dark cloth, while his decorated seat almost entirely disappears behind the folds of his white burnoose. To add contrast, the leather-bound books of the other portraits have been replaced by a small pile of three odd-looking volumes. Their difference stems from the fact that they are evidently not printed books, but manuscripts, easily recognizable by their boxlike covers, and most of all, their labels inscribed with Arabic letters. Unfortunately, only the bottom one is legible, but even that provides some meaningful context. One can clearly read *Kitab al-Hawî fi al-Fatawa*, the title of a compilation of fatwas (legal opinions) by the Egyptian scholar Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (1445–1505). Knowing that 'Abdelkader had received training as a mystic and as a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, the presence of this book cannot be dismissed as a simple decorative element. The chance that Abdullah Frères should have been able to provide such manuscripts is close to nothing; there is little doubt that the amir himself had carefully selected them for this occasion.³⁰ Wearing a typically Algerian costume and all his decorations, and posing in an austere setting with three manuscripts of Islamic content, 'Abdelkader had clearly chosen the way he wanted to fashion himself in front of the camera. The European style of the photograph and the dominantly European reception of the image could not take away the fact that the portrait was first and foremost defined by the sitter's agency and by the meaning that he wanted to give to his portrait.

Ironically, such self-fashioning could sometimes prove to be powerful enough to transform a genuinely and wholly European portrait into a manifesto of local identity. A good example is the portrait that the famous Islamist activist Ali Suavi (1838–1878) had made while in exile in France during the 1870s.³¹ The photograph was taken in a minor Parisian studio, Photographie César, which runs counter to the expectation of an "Ottoman" indigenous portrait. Yet Ali Suavi's control over the image was such that he managed to turn it into a very loud statement of his identity. His unruly hair, his metal-rimmed spectacles, his prayer beads, and his cloak made of coarse cloth, combined with the whitewashed wall behind him, all convey a message of



— 4 and 5: Two “unconventional” portraits. — 4: Üryanizade Ahmed Esad Efendi, 1880s, Cengiz Kahraman collection, Istanbul.

intense austerity, not unlike that of ‘Abdelkader. A particularly fascinating detail needs to be noted, however: the (rather naïve) transformation of the three books on the stand into Islamic manuscripts. In all evidence, the young man—again, like the amir—had wanted to pose with meaningful props. His choice fell onto the works of ‘Ali (599–661), caliph and the Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law, namely his *divan* or collection of poems, *Divan-i ‘Ali*, and *Nahj al-Balagha* (The way of eloquence), a collection of his sermons and sayings, compiled in the eleventh century. Yet as the photographer predictably did not have these or any other Islamic manuscripts among his props, and apparently Ali Suavi did not have anything comparable either, he resorted to a simple stratagem. Since Ottoman manuscripts generally had their title written either on a label pasted on the edge or on the surface created by the closed pages, he



— 5: Young woman, after 1901, Edhem Eldem collection, Istanbul.

decided to mimic the latter method by camouflaging three European books under two sheets of paper with the titles in his own hand. Nobody would be fooled by this amateurish trick; but the point was only to convey a clear message to the viewer, and that much he succeeded in doing.³²

What these two examples clearly show is that a local identity—in these cases defined through Islam—could easily be turned into a dominant feature of a portrait without even flirting with any of the Orientalist tropes of the time. Without any need for specific props, such as books and manuscripts, this aura of local agency can be identified in a number of portraits based simply on an intuitive perception of a “natural” pose and context. A good example is the scholar and Sheikhulislam Üryanizade Ahmed Esad Efendi (1813–1889), photographed in the very unpretentious surround-

ings of his garden or courtyard (fig. 4). The bearded old man, dressed in an old and worn cloak and sitting in an armchair evidently brought out for the occasion, stares vaguely into the direction of the camera. Three large leather-bound volumes—unidentified but easily recognizable as Ottoman lithographic prints of the first half of the nineteenth century—are placed on a wobbly wooden table, together with a disorderly bunch of roses and hydrangeas from the garden that have been left out to dry. The general feeling of intimacy that prevails, mixed with a gentle touch of senility and decay, gives the photograph an unmistakable feeling of authenticity, further enhanced by the fact that it bears no other indication than the generic reference to a Victoria format (3.5 × 5"). This is probably as "indigenous" as an Ottoman elite portrait will be: an elderly scholar caught in the intimacy of his home with no apparent wish to display anything else than the simplicity and regularity of his everyday life.

DIGGING INTO THE VERNACULAR

If "natural" poses and settings constitute one way of acceding to the vernacular, it is certainly not the only one. Some studio photographs, too, can unmistakably be identified as indigenous or vernacular just by looking at the rather simple—not to say primitive—way in which they were staged. The practice of major studios of the time may have followed very closely the norms and conventions developed in Europe, but as one moves down the social ladder, the European varnish disappears to make way for a very local interpretation of the craft. The anonymous portrait of an unidentified young woman is a good example of this process (fig. 5). Everything in the setting speaks of mediocrity: the mismatching tables, the plain white cloth, the ordinary carpets, the withering flowers, the cheap flowerpots, and the rugged wall showing behind the plain screen. The woman's general outlook is somewhat similar with her Sunday dress and overly-done hair. And yet she manages to convey an air of dignity and grace, creating a striking contrast with the general meanness of the scenery. Her calm and upright posture, the elegance of her head slightly turned sideways, and the graceful gesture of her left hand, as if to make sure that her earring and every ring on her fingers were clearly visible, all contribute to the creation of a charming, albeit naïve, image of a young woman in her prime. Once again, books had been placed on one of tables, a neat pile of three volumes, topped by a pocket watch, probably meant to be read as a sign of wealth. Interestingly, the largest volume can be identified as *Kamus-ı Türkî*, certainly the most popular and the best dictionary of the Turkish language at the turn of the century.³³ Contrary to the other examples above, this was certainly not a personal choice, but rather an accessory provided by the photographer, such as the flowerpots and probably the pocket watch. In a mirror image of

Ömer Pasha posing with Bescherelle's *Dictionnaire national*, the young woman has been portrayed with a book evidently chosen for its size and availability.

There are no clues as to who this woman or the photographer may have been, or as to when and where the portrait was made. One may assume that she was a non-Muslim, that she may have been a young bride (perhaps bride-to-be), and that the photographer may have been one of the many Armenians operating in provincial towns. All this may lead one to believe that there is a strong correlation between the vernacular and the anonymous. This may be true to a large extent, inasmuch as the vernacular seems to surface much more easily among people of modest means, who tended to use the services of less prestigious, or even anonymous, photographers. Yet one can find interesting examples of perfectly identified individuals posing before the camera of the best photographers and still embodying all the insignificance and marginality that would be associated with an "indigenous" identity as opposed to the "cosmopolitan" outlook of the upper crust of society. A perfect example is a series of photographs taken by Abdullah Frères of the rather insignificant employees of the *Hazine-i Hümayun* (Privy Purse), posing in front of the same kitsch backdrop that consists of an awkwardly drawn *alla franca* interior scene (fig. 6). All four men wear exactly the same suit and fez and are frozen in the same pose with their arms crossed over their bellies, right hand on top. To anyone with some knowledge of Ottoman customs and body language, this is the "*el pençe divan*" pose, a characteristic expression of deference and submission in the presence of a hierarchical superior. This pose, combined with the fact that the photographs are found in the Ottoman State Archives, and that the names inscribed on the back are all followed by "*kulları*," literally "your servant," suggests that the photographs were probably part of a systematic campaign designed to provide Abdülhamid and his administration with portraits of palace employees. Quite naturally, Abdullah Frères, photographers by appointment to the sultan, had been mobilized for the task. Yet confronted with the very modest profile of the group, the famous photographers completely changed their *modus operandi*. Instead of the luxurious furniture and accessories used for their prestigious sitters, Abdullah Frères—or rather a simple operator sent out to do the job—decided that these humble "standers" would have to make do with the endlessly repeated backdrop of a fake window and dresser. Was the pose suggested to them as a proper way to appear on a photograph destined for the palace archives? Probably not, as it must have come naturally to them to adopt the very servile attitude that they repeated day in and day out, whenever they were in the presence of their superiors. This would have been all the more true if they had been told—and they probably were—that the photograph would eventually be viewed by the Commander of the Faithful, their lord and master, Sultan Abdülhamid.

These photographs clearly demonstrate that Abdullah Frères, too, knew exactly how to adapt their craft to changing circumstances. If one register was the European-

style stately portrait reserved for the elite, an entirely different genre could be applied to the rank and file of the bureaucracy or, for that matter, to any member of the middle or lower classes. In this particular case, Abdullah Frères chose to convey a very local and traditional posture of respect and submission. In doing so, they ended up—perhaps unconsciously—reproducing a very traditional, in fact age-old, way of representing the servants of the sultan, a recurrent motif of Ottoman miniature painting (fig. 7). If anything, this should warn against making too hasty conclusions regarding the rootlessness or innocence of Ottoman photography.³⁴

One could speculate endlessly on how widespread such vernacular representations may really have been. It seems clear that their underrepresentation or even absence in private collections has a lot to do with their lack of desirability. An Abdullah Frères photograph depicting a miserable underling or pen-pusher is certainly not highly sought by collectors. Moreover, it is also quite likely that this particular kind of serial portraiture, depicting employees of a certain institution, would tend to remain within archival holdings. It seems, therefore, that the apparent neglect of this kind of material by most scholarship has a lot to do with the fact that it has almost exclusively relied on well-known collections, to the detriment of more systematic archival work. A particularly rich source in this respect is to be found among the so-called Abdülhamid albums preserved in the library of Istanbul University. Six of these albums contain exclusively photographs of inmates in Ottoman prisons.³⁵ The first attempts to portray criminals systematically in the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the late 1880s, but it never reached the level of efficiency and comprehensiveness that had initially been intended. Moreover, the erratic way in which the photographs were taken renders irrelevant any meaningful comparison with the anthropometric methods in use in Europe.³⁶

Nevertheless, while frustrating to historians intent on demonstrating the systematic modernity of Abdülhamid's reign, this lack of any real standardization can develop into a veritable treasure trove of vernacular photography.³⁷ One convict, sentenced to 15 years for murder, clearly reproduces the same "*el pençe divan*" pose as the palace underlings.³⁸ Yet the repertoire of poses seems to have been much wider. Two other convicts display exactly the same body language by holding one hand to their chest and resting the other on their calf. The fact that one of these convicts, Hayrullah Behlül, sentenced to hard labor for life, was a Muslim Ottoman (fig. 8, left) while the other, Yani Rizo, was a Greek national,³⁹ suggests that the pose had a meaning that transcended ethnic and religious divides. Once again, this is a pose that can be traced back to miniature painting. The sultans themselves are often depicted sitting with one hand on their lap and the other on their chest, forming a circle with the thumb and the index finger, or holding a delicate object, such as a rose. An even closer pose characterizes the two white eunuchs conversing as Grand Vizier Kara Ahmed Pasha is being strangled by the palace mutes at the *Babüssaade* (Gate of Felicity),⁴⁰ or two of the



— 6 and 7: “El pençe divan,” five centuries apart, a repetition of the Ottoman pose of humility and submission illustrated in a late-nineteenth-century photograph and an early-seventeenth-century manuscript. — 6: Abdullah Frères, Hüsnü Efendi, employee at the Privy Purse, 1305/1888. — 7: Sultan Mehmed I (r. 1413–1421) and his entourage, from Hoca Sadeddin’s *Tacü’t-Tevarih* (The Crown of Histories), c. 1600, Istanbul University Central Library.

three men—Torak and Güllabi Bey—represented at the court of Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574) (fig. 9). Interestingly, the third man on the left of the row, Kurd Bey, is represented with both hands on his lap, which also appears to have been a traditional form of portrayal that made it into the modernity of Ottoman prisons if one considers the identical pose adopted by Karabıçak oğlu Veli, sentenced to six years of hard labor for brigandage, (fig. 8, right), and Ayvazoğlu, sentenced to death for murder and banditry.⁴¹ This pose, which can also be documented in Japanese portraiture,⁴² seems to have been particularly popular when depicting sultans seated on their thrones, who thus acquired an air of calm majesty (fig. 10).

Last, but not least, mimicking the act of praying with both hands slightly raised and palms turned upward seems to have been a popular way of expressing feelings of devotion and submission. Once again, the pose can be traced back to a number of miniatures depicting moments of prayer, especially at funerals, but the act is so explicit that it needs no referential genealogy to be understood. Sentenced to lifelong banishment, when İbrahim the Albanian adopted this telling pose while staring straight into the camera lens, his message was clear: he was imploring the sultan’s mercy on this humble subject who had gone astray and committed unspeakable crimes.⁴³ But he was also praying for the glory of the sultan and expressing gratitude for his



— 8, 9 and 10: Traditional poses reflected in the photographs of convicts, and in miniature and miniature-inspired paintings. — 8: Hayrullah Behlül, sentenced to hard labor for life for evildoing (left), and Karabıçak oğlu Veli, sentenced to six years of hard labor for brigandage (right), Istanbul University Central Library.

munificence, exactly in the same way as entire groups of people demonstrated their submission and loyalty to the sovereign on every possible occasion. One needs only to browse the pages—especially the covers—of illustrated magazines of the Hamidian era, such as *Malumat* (Information) or *Servet-i Fünun* (Treasure of the arts), to find scores of photographs depicting the inauguration of some barracks, a school, or a hospital with crowds of officers and soldiers standing at attention while civil servants and students unanimously engage in a gesture of prayer and grace directed at their sovereign.⁴⁴

The examples listed above are the most obvious cases imaginable in terms of linking the vernacular to a preexisting tradition left more or less untouched by modernization. The search could be—and should be—widened to reveal other conventions, and more generally, possible traces of the development of an indigenous genre in photography as a result of the convergence of a localized practice and of the demands and expectations of a widening clientele. If Abdullah Frères could adapt their work to the profile of the rank and file of the palace administration by toning



— 9: Nigârî, Members of the court of Selim II, c. 1570, The Edwin Binney, 3rd, Collection of Turkish Art, Los Angeles County Museum. — 10: Joseph Warnia-Zarzecki, Sultan Selim III, late 19th or early-20th century, Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation Orientalist Painting Collection, Istanbul.

down European elements and enhancing certain local ones, one could start to imagine how far, say, a street photographer may have gone in his ability to reflect, quite naturally, the traits and exigencies of a particular vernacular environment. The problem, however, is that this untapped aspect of Ottoman photography cannot be addressed by the kind of cherry-picking that has characterized most of the scholarship in the field to this day. As a concrete example of the complexity that turns this potential field of research into a minefield, I would like to propose two other photographs of convicts from the Abdülhamid albums and visit the possible ramifications of their visual content. The two images are very similar, as they represent two Macedonian murderers sentenced to 15 years each, standing in more or less the same haughty pose, one foot on a rock, and wearing some kind of local costume. Eftim, on the left, has both arms hanging, while Spiro, on the right, displays a defiant “Renaissance elbow” (fig. 11).⁴⁵

In fact, both photographs are so unexpectedly cocky that despite all the idiosyncrasies of Ottoman prison photography, it seems impossible that they should have



— 11, 12 and 13: “Heroic” poses by convicts, a revolutionary, and soldiers.

— 11: Picture of the murderer Eftim, son of Apostol, from Ohrid, sentenced to fifteen years for murder (left) and picture of the murderer Spiro, son of Nikola, from Goritsa, sentenced to fifteen years for murder (right), Istanbul University Central Library.

depicted actual convicts. Additional details seem to confirm this impression, namely the absence of anything of a carceral nature, such as chains and shackles, and the fact that the photographs were evidently taken in a studio equipped with plants, rocks, a column, and a painted backdrop representing some sort of interior. In all likelihood, these were photographs that were taken *before* the two men were put into prison, probably of their own volition, in some provincial studio in Monastir (Bitola) or Üsküb (Skopje).

Leaving aside what this reveals about the level of standardization of Ottoman prison photography, the interesting point is that these photographs seem to belong to the genre of “heroic” portraits of revolutionaries and gang leaders, which have been studied by Martina Baleva.⁴⁶ What this implies, in turn, is that although possibly inspired by iconographic practices in Western Europe (one can think of Giuseppe Garibaldi [1807–1882] as a good example and model), this particular photographic genre developed in the Balkans in a particularly fertile environment of violence. There is little doubt, therefore, that the postcard of Enver Pasha (1881–1922) published



— 12: The champion of Liberty, Enver Bey in campaign uniform, 1908 or 1909, uncirculated postcard, published by Albert J. Barzilai, Salonica (Thessaloniki), Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library. — 13: Ottoman gendarmes posing with the severed heads of bandits in Macedonia, c. 1890, Sinan Kunalp collection, Istanbul.

in Thessaloniki almost immediately after the Young Turk Revolution of July 23, 1908, and boasting a perfectly staged representation of the “Champion of Liberty” in full military gear, belongs to this very particular genealogy of heroic iconography (fig. 12).⁴⁷ In fact, one could even claim that this very special vernacular register based on violence and rebellion could be widened to include much gorier images, such as those depicting Ottoman gendarmes posing with the severed heads of their victims as trophies of their struggle against local rebels and bandits (fig. 13).⁴⁸

Interestingly, urban roughs seem to have partaken in this same kind of passion for portraiture. Some of these photographs are particularly interesting in that they seem to navigate the ambiguous interstices between crime and homosexuality, a rather typical feature of the underworld of Ottoman ports, especially Istanbul. For understandable reasons, originals do not seem to have survived, but the record that Reşad Ekrem Koçu, a specialist of this underground culture, kept of some of them is exemplary.⁴⁹ One photograph of Bıçakçı Petri (Petri “the Knife”), also known as the “Monster of Galata” (Galata Canavarı) for the number of murders he committed



— 14 and 15: Two lost photographs, each with a tragic story to tell. — 14: Petri and the Croatian guard Nikola, drawing by Sabiha Bozcalı. — 15: Private Ârif and his murderer İsmail Hakkı. Ârif is the boy seated, drawing by Sabiha Bozcalı.

(apparently 13), shows the barefooted young criminal posing affectionately with Nikola, a Croatian guard for the Austrian embassy in Istanbul (fig. 14). Nikola had been particularly abusive, and Petri ended up shooting him in the heart. He had found Nikola drunk in a tavern, showing that very photograph around and shouting: “That’s me, and that’s my *mavri putana* (black whore).”⁵⁰ Another photograph showed two young men posing together: Ârif, 19, sitting in an armchair, and İsmail Hakkı, 18, standing right next to him (fig. 15). A similar tragedy awaited the couple; on July 13, 1890, İsmail Hakkı, working at the arsenal, had killed his lover, the beautiful Ârif, a soldier in the artillery. Not less interesting was the story of the photograph itself: “The photograph Ârif had taken of him with Hakkı used to be on display in the window of a small photographer’s shop on Tophane Avenue, near Kapuîci Bath; after the event, that man sold quite a number of those photographs for one *Mecidiye* apiece.”⁵¹

These two cases are interesting on more than one count. First, they point to the existence of a lower end of the market, of which Vafiadis, whose studio was located in

Sirkeci, was apparently a good example. It was probably highly unlikely for an urban rough from Galata to use the services of the high street photographers of Pera; instead, there were many modest shops in Galata, Sirkeci, or Beyazıt that catered to the needs of a modest, and sometimes marginal, clientele.⁵² They also provide a unique glimpse of the usage of these photographs. Nikola carried a photograph on him to brag about his love life on his drunken nights out, and a crime of passion had turned Ârif and Hakkı's memento of love into a marketable item of popular culture. In both cases, one gets a rather unique chance to witness the uses of photography that differed greatly from the touristic albums and bourgeois interiors, in which most of the upscale photographs ended up being displayed.⁵³

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Starting with the high street of photography and ending in the back alleys of the craft, I have attempted to show not only the existence of a lively sector of indigenous photography, but also some of the paths that may lead to its gradual discovery. To what extent I have been able to keep safe from the very traps I denounced earlier is open to discussion. Indeed, I could be accused of picking cherries myself, given that the examples I have presented here have not resulted from a systematic analysis of serial material. Ali Suavi's, Üryanizade Ahmed Esad's, or the unknown young woman's photographs have been gathered by chance and chosen for characteristics, which I *assume* are representative of a broader phenomenon. The other samples I have used are clearly more reliable, even if they did not emerge from an exhaustive quest. The four pictures of palace employees I have found are repetitive and standardized enough to allow for relatively riskless extrapolation: there must have been a much broader photographic campaign conducted in the same format and style. As to the convicts, although I have worked on only a tiny and random portion of the hundreds of photographs preserved at Istanbul University, the unmistakable repetition of some of the poses and the rather convincing linkages to traditional forms of representation seem to confirm the core of my argumentation.

At any rate, my objective was not so much to uncover the vernacular dimension of Ottoman photography as to discuss the multiple ways in which it is likely to emerge from a mass of still largely untapped sources. Through a multipronged approach, I have tried to explore some of the avenues that seemed most promising from this perspective. One first way is to break free from the "tyranny" of the great studios of Pera and of the private collections that tend to reproduce and amplify their upscale output. This can be done by seeking these studios' lower-end production—we have seen that it exists—or more importantly, that of the many other studios catering to the needs and demands of a wider and much more modest public. The second avenue has

to do with deciphering an indigenous dimension, based on an awareness of, and receptiveness to, certain patterns that are likely to appear, from poses to costumes and from themes to settings. We have come to a point where we can no longer afford to work on unique documents or flawed samples. What may have worked—up to a certain point—for the upper range of photographic production due to a familiar context and to relatively compatible theoretical frameworks borrowed from other disciplines and areas is most likely to fail as we descend into the unfamiliar depths of a popular and local practice.

I have hinted earlier at the potential that postcards represent, if only because the combination of image and text allowed for a contextualization of a single item in ways that are unthinkable for a stand-alone photograph. Moreover, the availability of this material and the relative ease, with which one can constitute samples open to serial or comparative analysis, makes this material particularly promising for future research.⁵⁴ While I hope to be able to continue research along this line, there is one project that falls straight within the scope of my understanding of systematic research on vernacular photography. Ever since I had started working on them, the archives of the Imperial Ottoman Bank have revealed a particularly fascinating dimension of the institution's record keeping. About 6,000 employee files between the 1890s and 1920s came with a full-length standing photograph of each individual.⁵⁵ These photographs thus constitute a fabulously rich database for the study of a rather mundane aspect of photography throughout the Ottoman lands, and later, the Republic of Turkey. As employees posted in the same town generally had their photographs taken at the same studio, repetitions of identical backdrops and props bring further emphasis to sartorial and other differences. A guard in fancy folkloric garb and a clerk in the classic "hand-in-waistcoat" pose⁵⁶ could share an identical "rustic" backdrop in a Beirut studio, while Tarkouljian's Studio Phébus in Istanbul could level all employees by using the same pose, standing stiffly in a dark suit with a bowler hat in hand. By cross-tabulating "objective" indications, such as the identity of the employee and of the studio with "subjective" criteria, such as pose and costume, one is likely to find rules of practice and patterns of behavior that remain invisible or speculative on individual photographs.⁵⁷

NOTES

- 1 The reason I have generally preferred using "vernacular" rather than "indigenous" throughout my text is that I find this term to be less "loaded." For example, while I would find no difficulty in using "vernacular" in a western context, the same would probably not be true of "indigenous." Then again, my use of the term is still tentative, and I should only insist on the fact that I do not see it as being incompatible with modernity or even with westernization. Vernacular, as I see it, qualifies and describes a form or content appropriated and accepted by a sizeable proportion of the non-elite local population.

- 2 Médaksian, *Marzevan*; Marsoobian, *Fragments*.
- 3 *Annuaire oriental* 1914.
- 4 On the albums and their “genealogy,” see, Allen, “Abdul Hamid II Collection;” Gavin, “Imperial Self Portrait;” and Waley, “Images of the Ottoman Empire.” Among the many studies focusing on this material, see Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 151–152; Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, 161–163; and Shaw, “‘Innocent’ Modernism?,” 86–93.
- 5 For example, see Çizgen/Özandes, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*; Öztuncay, *James Robertson*; Öztuncay, *Vasilaki Kargopolu*; Öztuncay, *Photographers of Constantinople*; Öztuncay, *Hanedan ve Kamera*; and Öztuncay, *Robertson*.
- 6 Shaw, “‘Innocent’ Modernism?,” 81–83.
- 7 Shaw herself notes: “It would be as inappropriate to consider a venerable empire of six centuries as a child as it would be naïve to understand its attempt to emulate the West as innocent” (“‘Innocent’ Modernism?,” 91).
- 8 In relation to Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876), Shaw uses the information that the sultan did not like his portrait by [Jules] Derain, but greatly appreciated those by Abdullah Frères, to claim that the sultan was unaware of what it meant to have his portrait taken and saw no need to have such portraits made. She then goes on to describe his portrait by Derain as “anything but imperial,” attributing him a stiffness incompatible with grandeur. She also adds that the image was “cropped too closely,” thus squeezing him “in a tight box that is inconsistent with his public image as an accomplished wrestler” (“‘Innocent’ Modernism?,” 84–85). This is a very problematic series of statements. To assume that Abdülaziz, who was himself an accomplished artist and several times portrayed by European painters, including Antoine Guillemet (1843–1918) and Stanisław Chlebowski (1835–1884), knew nothing about portraiture runs counter to everything we know about him. Moreover, one should also note that what she presents as a portrait by Derain is in fact by Abdullah Frères, and that the cropping is the making of the source she has used (Çizgen/Özandes, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, 226), not of the original, which portrays him in full majesty against a plain background (Öztuncay, *Photographers of Constantinople*, II, 355). Finally, assuming that the sultan’s public image was that of an “accomplished wrestler” amounts to a confusion of two very different registers, that of a popular (and oral) myth and that of royal imagery. For a proper and thorough discussion of Abdülaziz as an artist, patron, and actor of visual culture, see Roberts, *Istanbul Exchanges*, 37–74.
- 9 Öztuncay, *Photographers of Constantinople*, II, 383.
- 10 Pouillon, “Du témoignage.”
- 11 Among early studies of this genre in an Ottoman context, see Erdogdu “Victorian Market;” Erdogdu “Picturing Alterity;” and Woodward, “Photographic Practice.” Recent publications show that this particular perspective has not lost its appeal; see Behdad/Gartlan, *Photography’s Orientalism*.
- 12 On the complex relationship between Orientalism and the Ottoman elite, see Çelik, “Speaking Back;” and Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism.”
- 13 Hamdy/de Launay, *Costumes populaires*. On Ottoman display strategies, see Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*. For a detailed study of the album, see Ersoy, “*Elbise-i Osmaniyye*.”
- 14 Said, *Orientalism*.
- 15 I have recently engaged in a more or less systematic revisiting of this publication by studying how it was censored under Abdülhamid II (Eldem, “*Elbise-i Osmaniye*”); the visual composition of its plates (Eldem, “*Elbise-i Osmaniye 2*”); its recycling in European sources and displays (Eldem, “*Elbise-i Osmaniye 3*”); and its place within the broader context and tradition of costume albums and exhibitions (Eldem “*Elbise-i Osmaniye 4*”).

- 16 A particularly ironic example is the comment on a photograph from the Abdülhamid albums in Washington, D.C., showing a group of teachers and students at the School for the Deaf and Dumb, in which the students are seen using sign language: “Unfortunately, however, Ottoman sign language was independent of any other sign language of the era and is no longer known. Therefore their speech is impossible to interpret” (Shaw, “‘Innocent’ Modernism?,” 86–87, 90). The truth is that Ottoman sign language is well known; an illustrated plate showing all the signs and their correspondence can be found in Haydar, “Sağır ve Dilsizler,” 1252. Knowing this, it becomes possible to decipher the mysterious message, which turns out to be, rather predictably, “Padişahım çok yaşa!” or “Long live the Sultan!” One step further, one notices a rather naïve anomaly in the picture, as the children spell the text from *their* right to left, resulting in a photograph that spells the words backward to a reader of the Arabic script. This suggests that nobody really expected viewers to be able to read the text. Finally, further research would have revealed that beside the London and Washington, D.C. albums, this image was “recycled” some seven years later in the illustrated weekly *Servet-i Fünun* on the occasion of Abdülhamid’s silver jubilee (*Servet-i Fünun* 1900, 418). See also Eldem, “Powerful Images,” 136–137, 140–141.
- 17 See, for example, n. 7.
- 18 Özendes, *Orientalism in Photography*; Erdogdu, “Victorian Market;” and Erdogdu, “Picturing Alterity.”
- 19 Woodward, “Photographic Practice,” 365–371.
- 20 Eldem, “Powerful Images,” 114–115.
- 21 Woodward, “Photographic Practice,” 369.
- 22 Ibid., 366, 368–369.
- 23 Basiretçi, “Şehir mektubu,” 2; Basiretçi, *İstanbul mektupları*, 51–52. For an English translation of the text, see Eldem, “Powerful Images,” 107–108.
- 24 Prime Ministry Ottoman State Archives, Istanbul (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, hereafter BOA), İ. DH. 1264/99376, 11 Receb 1309 (9 February 1892).
- 25 “Saraydaki halinizi göreceğiniz geldi ise size burada hatırlatıyorum ablacığım.” For a detailed commentary, see Eldem, “Orientalist Reality.”
- 26 One needs only to browse the pages of Öztuncay’s work to spot the following sitters posing with books: Sultan Abdülaziz; princes Yusuf İzzeddin, Mahmud Celaleddin (1862–1888), Mehmed Burhaneddin (1885–1949), Mehmed Vahideddin (Mehmed VI, r. 1918–1922), and Selim Süleyman (1861–1909); Garabed Artin Davud Pasha (1816–1877), Ömer Pasha (1806–1871), Midhat Pasha (1822–1884), Kabuli Pasha (1812–1875), Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1822–1895), Sadreddin Çelebi, Abdülvahid Çelebi (–1907), and Patriarch Andon-Bedros (Antoine) IX Hassoun (1809–1884). Öztuncay, *Photographers of Constantinople*, I, 194, 204–205, 217; II, 358–360, 368–369, 379, 383, 385–387, 390–391.
- 27 Probably Bescherelle, *Dictionnaire national*.
- 28 Öztuncay, *Photographers of Constantinople*, I, 205.
- 29 Ibid., 177; II, 358.
- 30 I am grateful to my colleagues François Pouillon, from the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, and Ahmed Bouyerdene, both specialists of ‘Abdelkader’s life and career, for confirming my inkling that the manuscript was probably placed there by the amir himself. ‘Abdelkader’s *Kitab al Mawaqif* [The book of stations] includes several references to al-Suyuti (‘Abd al-Qadir al-Djaza’iri 200–2002, I, 220, 612; II, 510; III, 82).
- 31 This is one of 26 photographs contained in an envelope preserved at the Prime Ministry’s Ottoman Archive (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA, Y. EE. 57/1, no. 2). Ali Suavi is not explicitly identified on the photograph, and there is no

- indication as to how this small sample came into being. A safe guess is that it may have been found at Yıldız Palace after Abdülhamid II's dethronement in late April 1909.
- 32 On this and other portraits with books, see Eldem, "Bookish Portraits."
- 33 Sami, *Kamus-ı Türkî*.
- 34 I am particularly thankful to my colleagues Serpil Bağcı from Hacettepe University and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu from Boğaziçi University, both specialists of early modern Ottoman visual culture, for having encouraged me to speculate in this direction.
- 35 Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91285, 91287, 91290, 91291, 91292, and 91293.
- 36 Based on an initial undocumented statement to that effect (Çizgen, *Photography of the Ottoman Empire*, 23), most scholarship unquestioningly accepts the idea that these photographs were taken to enable Abdülhamid II to choose those convicts he wished to pardon. Further research traces this anecdote back to Reşad Ekrem Koçu, who claimed that these photographs were taken in 1900 for the sultan's silver jubilee to be used in pardoning certain convicts on this festive occasion (Koçu, "Galata," 5825). However, this information is proven wrong by archival documentation which dates the first attempts to photograph prison inmates to 1888, twelve years before the jubilee (BOA, DH. MKT. 1499/70, 16 Receb 1305 / 8 April 1888).
- 37 Eldem, "Bad Boys."
- 38 "Hüseyin bin Faris from the district of Bekaa, sentenced to fifteen years for murder." Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91290/73.
- 39 "The Greek national Yani Rizo, sentenced to death for murder." Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91290/107.
- 40 The death by strangulation of Grand Vizier Kara Ahmed Pasha at the Gate of Felicity, Lokman, *Hünernâme*, Topkapı Palace Museum, H 1524, v. 177b.
- 41 "Ayvazoğlu, sentenced to death for banditry and murder." Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91290/115.
- 42 With some differences, such as the fact that in its Japanese version, for example, the subject's hands are generally made into fists instead of lying flat on their lap. Many thanks to my colleague Selçuk Esenbel from Boğaziçi University for her precious comments.
- 43 "İbrahim the Albanian, who engaged in evil deeds in Yakovo, was caught armed by the imperial troops on the battle ground and exiled for life," Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91290/108.
- 44 The photograph of the School for the Deaf and Dumb mentioned earlier is particularly rich in this respect: the older students use sign language to spell "Long live the Sultan," the younger ones hold up their hands in a gesture of prayer, and the teachers have crossed their hands over their bellies in the traditional gesture of respect described above.
- 45 Spicer, "Renaissance Elbow."
- 46 Baleva, "Revolution in the Darkroom." In the same vein, a similar phenomenon can be observed among Armenian revolutionaries (Hartmann, "Shaping the Armenian Warrior").
- 47 Eldem, "Powerful Images," 148.
- 48 On this particular imagery, see *ibid.*, 120–129.
- 49 Reşad Ekrem Koçu (1905–1975) began publishing them in installments of his *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Istanbul) in 1944. By 1971, he had to discontinue his project after 11 volumes up to the letter "G." A rich source of information on the history and lore of Istanbul, this work was illustrated with drawings that either reproduced existing documents or recreated undocumented scenes and characters. One of the most fascinating aspects of this work is its heavy reliance on oral and other sources to document the underground and

- marginal culture of the city with a particular emphasis on its homosocial and homosexual dimensions. It is also striking in its adaptation of a rational-encyclopedic format to the very idiosyncratic handling of topics. A typical example would be the existence of entries, such as “Children (victims of stepmothers)” or “On the difficulty for families with children to find a place to rent” (“Çocuk, Üvey anaların kurbanı çocuklar” and “Çocuklu ailenin kira ile mesken bulma zorluğu.”) (Koçu, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, VIII, 4067–4068, 4084–4085).
- 50 Kınaylı, “Galata,” 5890.
- 51 Koçu, “Ârif,” 981. The *Mecidiye* was a twenty-piastre silver coin, corresponding to approximately four shillings, a rather substantial amount at the time.
- 52 For a map of Istanbul giving the location of the principal studios in 1912, see Çelik/Eldem (eds.), *Camera Ottomana*, 18–19. It is noteworthy that Ârif and Hakkı’s photograph is reported to have been displayed and sold at a “small photographer’s shop” in Tophane. The commercial directories of the time do not record any studio in the area, and Vafiadis’ shop was across the Golden Horn in Sirkeci. This clearly means that there was a third tier in the market, consisting of popular businesses, which may have even dealt in the reproduction and distribution of the major studios’ work.
- 53 For example, see the following description of a (petit) bourgeois living room in a Greek home of Istanbul at the turn of the century: “A large doll, a stuffed bird, a sort of shawl with artificial flowers and imitation fruits, a hunting gun, a Japanese fan, a guitar, chromolithographs of garish colors, embroidered trinket sacks, a biscuit dog, a chess set, a framed diploma, a few vases, a large Turkish pipe with its amber mouthpiece, seashells, a bugle made of a large horn, many other objects I forget, and a mass of photographs on the walls, on a console, on a table. In short, they had brought together in this room everything precious in the house, and this living room-museum spoke of a woman who loved everything flashy and conspicuous but completely lacked taste.” Giraud, “La rue,” 523–524.
- 54 Eldem, “Powerful Images,” 139–149.
- 55 Eldem, “Dossiers.”
- 56 Meyer, “Re-Dressing,” 45–63.
- 57 Eldem, “Unity in Diversity.”

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- 1: Fostin Cotchen collection, New York.
- 2: Hamdy/de Launay, *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873*, part 3, pl. XL.
- 3, 4: Cengiz Kahraman collection, Istanbul.
- 5: Edhem Eldem collection, Istanbul.
- 6: BOA, Y. EE. 57/1, n° 5.
- 7: Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, T 5970, fol. 264 v°.
- 8: Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91290/82.
- 9: Los Angeles County Museum M.85.237.20.
- 10: Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Orientalist Painting Collection, Istanbul.
- 11: Istanbul University Central Library, Rare Books Collection, 91290/122.
- 12: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library, Krt_000921.
- 13: Sinan Kunalalp collection, Istanbul.
- 14: Kınaylı, “Galata Canavarı Bıçakçı Petri,” 5890.
- 15: Koçu, “Ârif (Nefer),” 980.

MOHAMMADREZA TAHMASBPOUR

TRANSLATED BY REZA SHEIKH

PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE QAJAR ERA, 1842–1925

In memory of Chahryar Adle

From the period of early photography in Iran, eighty-three years fell within the Qajar era, the years 1842 to 1925. Photographs, books, writings, and various events all attest that this was indeed a flourishing period within history of photography in Iran. The portrait photographs of kings and their entourages, people and their lives and mores, their professions, villages and cityscapes, natural settings, architecture, transportation, various ceremonies and photographs of myriad other topics which have reached us today have managed to preserve these images into the twenty-first century.

One hundred seventy-three years have passed since the first daguerreotype was taken in Iran in mid-December 1842.¹ Mohammad Shah (1834–1848) of the Qajar Dynasty (1785–1925) was the reigning monarch when this amazing phenomenon and visual miracle of photography, which had come into being thanks to modern scientific advancements in mechanics, physics and chemistry during the nineteenth century, found its way through the palace gates in Tehran, following his written request to the governments of tsarist Russia and Great Britain. The official request by the Iranian government to acquire the necessary equipment to take daguerreotype photographs deserves particular attention, pointing to an awareness of the uses and applications of this innovation. This information may have found its way to the royal court through translations of European newspapers, from Europeans travelling to Iran, or Iranians returning from Europe. The fact that photography entered Iran according to an official request by the Iranian royal court and not as a gift between European and Eastern royalty is of key importance. This assertive action, as manifested through the further patronage of photography by the succeeding monarch Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–1896), indicates an appreciation of the varied uses of this invention.

The first daguerreotypes are those of Mohammad Shah, his crown prince, prime minister, and a number of courtiers made in 1842 by Nikolai Pavlov, a young Russian diplomat who had been trained and sent to Tehran for this purpose. Two years later



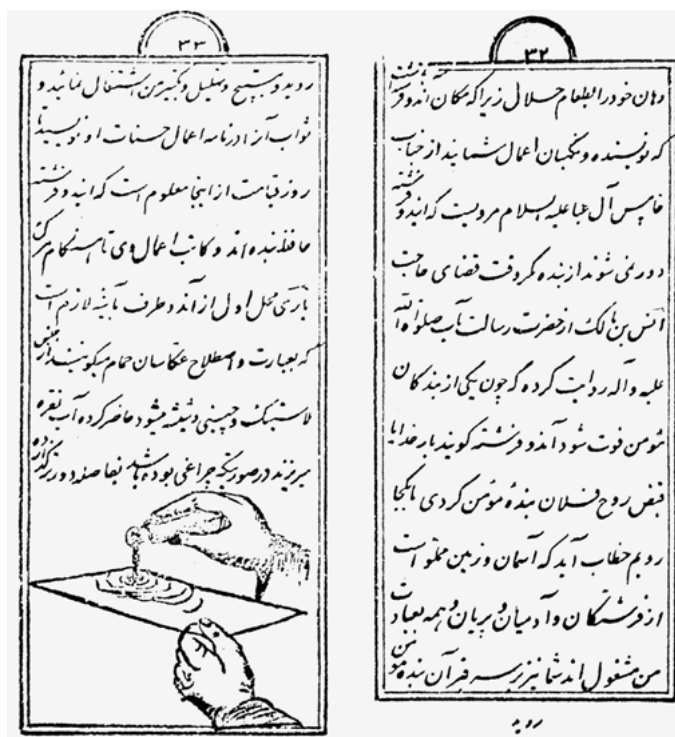
— 1: Semblance of Mansur Khan while the camera is positioned to take a daguerreotype photograph from his face, the photographer is a foreigner, 1854 by Mirza Reza Tabrizi, Watercolor, Amiranashvili Museum of Tbilisi.

the Frenchman Jules Richard (1816–1891) also produced daguerreotypes of the royal family. The daguerreotype and talbotype (or calotype) were used during the early years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign. In 1857, *Ruznameh-ye vaqaye'-e ettefaqiyeh* (Newspaper of current events), the official Iranian newspaper at the time, shows an advertisement for the sale of silver products, as well as "a face drawing/image making machine that is known as *daguerreotype*" (emphasis added).² Sporadic articles in official journals of the period indicate that daguerreotype photography was in use in Iran for a span of at least 15 years.³ Unfortunately most of the actual daguerreotype images have not survived (fig. 1).⁴



— 2: Francis Carlhian, Aqa Reza 'Akkasbashi in adolescent years (first person on the left) with a group of courtiers, c. 1858, The Guimet Museum for Asian Arts in Paris.

The invention and circulation of new methods in photography, specifically developing and printing photographs, along with Naser al-Din Shah's keen personal interest, accelerated the overall proliferation of photography in Iran. Naser al-Din Shah established the 'Akkashaneh-ye mobarakeh-ye homayuni (Royal Photography Studio) in the Golestan Palace in Tehran and hired the French photographer Francis Carlhian (1818–1870) to undertake systematically the task of photography instruction. While making talbotypes in 1859–1865, Carlhian was also instrumental in the introduction of the wet collodion process to Iran. An article in the government gazette, *Ruznameh-ye doulat-e 'aliyyeh-ye Iran* (Newspaper of the Imperial Government of Iran), dated 1862,



— 3: Two pages of the book 'Aksiyeh hashriyeh (dar bayan-e moghayese-ye 'amalkard-e 'akkasi va chegunegi-ye ta'sir-e kerdar-e donyavi-ye ensan dar akherat az manzar-e ravayat-e dini) by Mohammad Ebn 'Ali Meshkat al-Molk, lithograph print, 1889, University of Tehran Central Library.

reports on the progress of those studying photography under Carlhian at the Dar al-Fonun (the new polytechnic school in Tehran). This article is of key importance to the study of education in photography at Iran's first university, which eventually became Tehran University (fig. 2).⁵ Carlhian also tutored Aqa Reza (1843–1889), who became the first official 'akkasbashi (court photographer) in 1863.⁶ Other Europeans employed by the Iranian military or those who traveled to the country as members of diplomatic missions also contributed to feeding the royal craze for photography, thus helping to sustain the interest in photography at large. Austrian Lieutenant Officer August Karl Křžiž (1814–1886), Domenico Focchetti, Luigi Pesce (1818–1891), Antonio Giannuzzi (1819–1876), and Luigi Montabone (d. 1877) are among this group whose works can be found in the archives of Golestan Palace.

The first technical books on teaching photography were translated by order of the king. Soon aesthetic, philosophical, and religious debates followed. The hand-

written manuscript “Qava‘ed-e ‘aks va telegraf” (Principles of the photograph and telegraph, 1880) and a lithographed manuscript “Aksiyeh-ye hashriyeh” (Photography for everybody, 1889) are two such publications. The first work, which was written by ‘Ali-Reza Lahiji Najafi, discusses a range of issues. The topic of the “instability” versus “permanence” of an image as registered in a mirror as opposed to a photograph, which represents a fundamental philosophic debate dating back to the early days of the history of photography, is discussed alongside the aesthetics of photography. The second work, written by the courtier Mohammad Ebn ‘Ali Meshkat al-Molk, finds similarities between photography and religion: the dichotomy of human actions and life on earth with its reflection on a person’s afterlife is comparable to the positive and negative image in photographic printing practice. These two works feature among the pioneering literature on the theoretic precepts of photography in Iran. There are also writings on photography found in the memoirs of Qajar courtiers, such as E’temad al-Saltaneh (1843–1896) and ‘Ali-Naqi Hakem al-Mamalek, which can be considered as first examples of photography criticism (fig. 3).

In 1867 during Naser al-Din Shah’s first visit to the northeastern province of Khorasan he ordered Aqa Reza ‘Akkasbashi to take a photograph of Hajj Molla Hadi Sabzavari (1797–1873), a renowned Iranian philosopher of the nineteenth century. Sabzavari was unaware of the invention of photography before his encounter with the court photographer. Based on his traditional philosophical beliefs, he insisted that the “shadow” cannot exist without the presence of an “object.” After being confronted with his own photograph and having overcome the initial shock, he enthusiastically proclaimed photography to be a means to prove the science of perspective. His debate on the topic is among the first philosophical treatments of photography during the Qajar era. Initial reactions of Iranian intellectuals toward photography is indeed a topic that deserves further research, as a matter that can be extended to cover other common uses of photography. One can thus state that theoretic debates regarding photography began with the entry of photography into Iran.⁷

It was in light of Naser al-Din Shah’s enthusiasm and the efforts of early photographers that various uses of photography took ground in nineteenth century Iran. Aware of the value of visual documentation, the king ordered photographs of various events pertaining to officialdom, commissioned photographic expeditions across the country, and had photographers accompany him during his own travels. These photographs, with explanatory subtitles, were meticulously pasted in photograph albums and kept in the Golestan Palace archives. He also ordered systematic photographing of all those who worked for him and of the higher echelons of the government, thus amounting to a visual database for identification and control. Moreover, Naser al-Din Shah’s keen interest in photography was instrumental in assuring its institutionalization within court and governmental activities, encouraging court photographers to experiment with the new medium, and setting in motion a gradual but sustained

propagation of photography beyond the royal court. In 1868 the first public photography studio was established in Tehran, literally outside the palace walls, by a number of court photographers, among them Aqa Reza 'Akkasbashi's student 'Abbas-'Ali Baik. By necessity and by expedience, portrait photography, photographic documentation, and photographic reportage took hold in Iran during this period, while a number of its applications were well-advanced in comparison to contemporaneous activities worldwide.⁸ These years were thus the formative and among the most fruitful years of photography in Iran before the Pahlavi period (1925–1979), which subsequently implemented limitations and controls on photographic production.

Photography also became Naser al-Din Shah's personal entertainment. Many of his photographs can be found among the photograph albums at Golestan Palace, and they are indicative of his sustained interest during his nearly fifty-year reign. The topics depicted were his wives—some of whom acted as his assistants, such as Anis al-Douleh (1840–1897), Amineh Aqdas (d. 1893), and a woman named Bagheri—, children of the court staff, daily events of court life, and self-portraits. His personal handwritten comments can be found next to most of these photographs, some of which carry detailed information about his equipment, the apparatus, and even his feelings about photography. Eventually, a number of his wives, such as Bagheri, experimented with photography within the confines of the family as well (fig. 4).

Besides instruction and training in photography for the purpose of photographing events and places chosen by the king, the government elite, and courtiers, a photography studio was set up in the Dar al-Fonun. This was the second governmental studio established (c. 1861), after the royal atelier on the grounds of the Golestan Palace. Along with the public photography studio founded in 1868, the Dar al-Fonun studio paved the way for the exposure of the broader public to photography in general. Based on the newspapers and almanacs published during this period, the last decade of Naser al-Din Shah's reign (1890s) witnessed an increasing number of studios being established in the main cities of the country: Tabriz, Isfahan, Mashad, Shiraz, Bush-ejr, Yazd, Kerman, and Rasht.⁹ Furthermore a number of photographers left the country to receive training in Europe around this time, such as Mirza Ahmad 'Akkasbashi in France and Abdollah Mirza Qajar (1850–1912) in Austria.

The first photographers in Europe had inherited the forms and principles of realist and naturalist traditions of painting; Iranian photographers were not as used to these similar forms of realistic image-making promoted by the camera's "window on the world." As a result, Iranian photography during the early and middle years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign was more experimental and original, yet the practice of stylistic innovations was shortly thereafter to give way to the overwhelming influx of European photographs and their influence. Next to this amateur and dilettante outlook on taking photographs, one must not forget the intelligent effort of a number of the early Iranian photographers to go beyond established modes and practices, par-

ticularly during the 1860s–1880s. Consequently, one may conclude that their limited exposure to realist forms of image-making and to European conventions of perspective in Iranian paintings gave rise to fresh creativity among early Iranian photographers.¹⁰ From the present vantage point, it seems unlikely that these first photographs were created with the intention of producing an artwork; however, the mere fact that photographers tried to bypass the conventions of their times indicates an eagerness to be inventive in their image production and to “see/perceive” the world differently. One is tempted to ask: if Iranian photographers had continued to photograph without the massive influx of European visual material gradually entering through the arrival of photographs, illustrated books, and journals, as well as their own direct exposure during their travels to Europe, would Iranian photographers have been able to boast a special style of photographing worldly phenomena? The author is inclined to take an affirmative stance.



— 4: Naser al-Din Shah, “Baqeri broke half of the glass (negative) in the holder that is why it turned out this way,” Naser al-Din Shah and three of his wives. The caption explains the reason why the glass negative was broken, 1868, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

The more renowned photographers active during the formative years of photography in Iran (1860s–1920s) are: Aqa Reza ‘Akkasbashi, Soltan Ovays Mirza, ‘Ali Khan ‘Amin Hazrat, ‘Abbas-‘Ali Baik, Hosayn-‘Ali, Yusef Khan, Mir Seyyed ‘Ali, Manuchehr Khan, Mirza Ahmad Sani‘al-Saltaneh, Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1842–1933), Agaiantz Armeni, Joseph Papazian, Mohammad Ja‘far Qajar, Mohammad Hasan Qajar, ‘Abdollah Qajar, Amir Jalil al-Dowleh Qajar, and Mirza Jahangir Khan ‘Akkas.¹¹

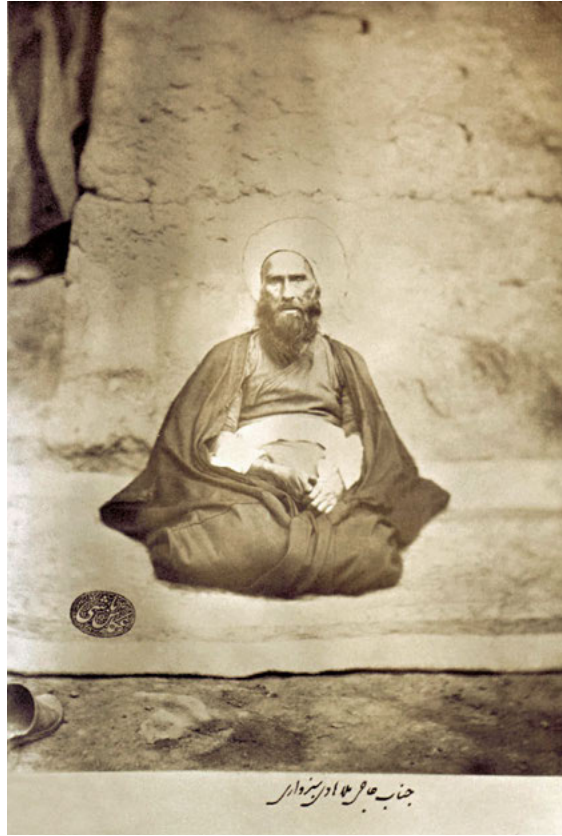
The achievements in the domain of photography that transpired during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah may be enumerated as:

1. the beginning of photographic documentation;
2. the systematic instruction of photography and its principles in Iran;
3. the institutionalization and establishment of an official photography department at the royal court;
4. the creation of the title ‘*akkasbashi* as the highest honor to be bestowed on a photographer;
5. photographs taken of women;
6. the king’s explanatory texts that accompany photographs in the royal photograph albums;
7. encouraging the publication of original and translated texts related to photography;
8. the dissemination of photography among the elite and courtiers;
9. the establishment of the first public photography studio in Tehran;
10. the establishment of public photography studios in major cities in Iran.

It is necessary to revisit with great discretion the pivotal years of the nearly fifty-year reign of Naser al-Din Shah, in terms of the special features linked to photography and in consideration of the fact that the formation of this art/science took ground during this time. Indeed, these were some of the most important years for nineteenth-century Iranian photography and Iranian photohistory in general (fig. 5).

During the eleven-year reign of Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1896–1906) a great number number of photography studios continued to be established in large cities across the country. As in the Naseri period, the royal atelier kept working with a number of different photographers to fulfill the needs of the court. The Dar al-Fonun studio took second place as a government studio, while maintaining its educational profile. Among the growing number of studios in Tehran, the most renowned photographers were: Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Antoin Sevruguin, Mirza Ahmad Sani‘ al-Saltaneh, Mirza Ebrahim Rahmani ‘Akkasbashi (Mirza Ebrahim Mosavver-Rahmani, 1874–1915), Abolqasem Nuri, Mirza ‘Abdolbaqi, Agaiantz Armeni, Khan Baba al-Hosayni, Ivanov (Roussie Khan), Aqa Gholam-Reza.

The advent of handheld cameras, which had entered the market during the late 1890s, paved the way for wealthier families to purchase cameras and experiment



— 5: Aqa Reza 'Akkasbashi, Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

with the marvels of photography. New books were written and translated to cover these advances in photographic methods and processes (gelatin dry plates, photographic printing papers, and new developing techniques), while teaching manuals were also written and published during this period to cover the needs of self-taught practitioners.¹² The increasing sensitivity of light-sensitive emulsions made photography of moving subjects possible. Advances in publication techniques alongside that of photogravure brought about a growing number of illustrated newspapers. However limited they were, a number of Persian-language newspapers published outside the country began printing photographs.

Extensive relations with European countries, an increasing number of photographers receiving training in or simply traveling to Europe, European-illustrated maga-

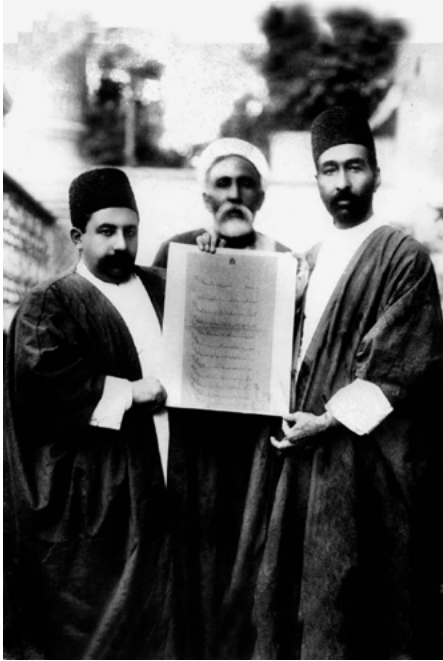
zines, and cinematography resulted in a greater exposure to European models and poses, thereby replacing the unique, naive gaze of earlier Iranian photographers. The moving images of cinema eclipsed the still photograph at the court of Mozaffar al-Din Shah. This may be one of the reasons why court photography received less attention during his reign.

Toward the end of the Mozaffari era an inkling of what may be called an urban middle class was on the rise as larger numbers of their portrait photographs can be found, expressing their familiarity with the camera unlike the bemused and astonished expressions of the earlier days. Social discontent, which had been on the rise since the late nineteenth century, found expression in the reformist movements of the early twentieth century, culminating in what became known as the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911), which limited monarchical powers and established Iran's first parliament (1906). During this socio-political movement, photography played a decisive role as a means to document and to raise awareness of unfolding events.¹³

The first manifestations in Iran of the documentary powers of the camera came to light in 1905 when a photograph depicting Joseph Naus, the Belgian head of the Iranian customs service, wearing a cleric's outfit during a masquerade, was disseminated among the city crowds (fig. 6):



— 6: The Belgian Monsieur Naus (third person standing from left) in clerical clothes with other foreigners in a private party, 1905, Archive of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies of Iran (IICHS), Tehran.



— 7: A group of merchants from Tehran holding the Constitution at the house of Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Amin al- Zarb in Tehran, 1906, Archive of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies of Iran (IICHS), Tehran.

“Members of the Secret Society¹⁴ informed Mirza Mostafa Ashtiyani [one of the protest leaders] that a photograph of Monsieur Naus, the head [Belgian] customs official, has been found in the office of Amin al-Soltan [the prime minister], in which he is dressed [in masquerade] in a long cloak and a turban. It would be an opportunity, if [we could get a hold of] this photograph. Mirza [Mostafa Ashtiyani] immediately visited Mohammad Taqi-Khan, the Amin al-Soltan’s secretary, obtained the photograph, made many copies, and distributed among the people. The pretext and grounds [for protest] fell into the men’s hands. Mr. [Ayatollah Sayyed ‘Abdollah] Behbahani [another protest leader and a religious cleric] spread the rumors from the minbar and during his lectures at the seminary. His students protested that this is an insult, these [were their] religious clothes, and this was not permitted in any religion. This matter was discussed in other gatherings, and only a few leaders and clerics did not join in with Mr. Behbahani.”¹⁵

This event was to trigger street demonstrations that ultimately resulted in a widespread social protest movement, in which photographs and photography were to play critical roles. As such, this photograph helped ignite the spark that would become the fire of the Constitutional Revolution.

At a time when most viewers accepted the veracity of the photograph, its documentary value was decisive in spreading “real” news, hence leaving no doubt for the viewer. An example of such a “news-breaking event” that found widespread circulation is a photograph of three well-known and trusted merchants who were among the key figures of the protest movement holding a copy of the constitution that limited his own powers signed by Mozaffar al-Din Shah in concession to the protesters (fig. 7). All stages of the revolution, city protests, strikes, mass sit-ins, portraits of religious leaders, and various protagonists have been documented in photographs.

Mozaffar al-Din Shah died shortly after he signed the constitution. His son, Mohammad-‘Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1907–1909), bombarded the parliament in Tehran in defiance of the newly-conceded power and unleashed a violent reactionary coup which brought about a countermovement of the revolutionaries across the country. Once again, photographs became the “eye” of the revolution, spreading the images of the capitol city and other centers of protest across the country. Images of religious leaders, national heroes, partisan fighters posing in studios or in makeshift studios, those killed on the field or hung by reactionary forces, and slain “enemies” were photographed and then distributed far and wide (fig. 8).

It had been many years since the camera had left the palace walls and entered the streets. Photography had been instated as a profession, and photographing with commercial interest had taken hold. Many photographers recorded the events of these tumultuous years with the aim of selling their work to potential customers, as evidenced by the numerous extant postcards of the revolution.¹⁶ These postcards with socio-political content found an eager market after the revolution (c. 1911). Depicting images of the Constitutional Revolution in postcards, similar to modern-day political posters, became an efficient and inexpensive means of circulating these pictures. Many of these postcards can be found in official and private archives today, which is clearly indicative of the robust postcard market in Iran at that time.

Many of the photographs of the constitutional period carried vivid political messages. Photographs of the protesters who had taken refuge behind the walls of the British and Ottoman embassies, and remained there for long periods of time, found their way outside the foreign compound and reveal the extent of these mass protests.¹⁷ Following Mohammad-‘Ali Shah’s reactionary coup, one can witness the first concerted efforts to use photographs as a tool to incite public reaction in the main cities across the country in response to the events taking place in the capitol city. By making multiple copies and sending the pictures to other cities, some photographers managed to promulgate these images across the country. Today we are fortunately in possession of many photographs of the events that took place in Tehran and other cities of this seminal moment in modern Iranian history (fig. 9).

During the political crackdown and in the midst of widespread imprisonment of activists, severe censorship was imposed on photographers and on the sale of photo-



— 8: Sit-in of constitutionalists at the British Embassy grounds, 1906, Archive of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies of Iran (IICHS), Tehran. — 9: A number of gentlemen partaking in the sit-in at the Ottoman Embassy in 1908 for the Constitution of Iran, postcard.

graphs of protagonists, such as members of parliament, mujahidin, including Sattar Khan (1866–1914), and national heroes. The MP Mirza Ebrahim Khan Kalantari Baghmisheh'i, from the northwestern city of Tabriz, wrote in his memoirs:

“It had been some time since the photograph of Sattar Khan had been sent to Tehran from Tabriz, [and] photographers [had made copies of it] and sold the photographs, making a good living. Yesterday, government inspectors shut down all the photography studios and banned the sale of photographs. It is rumored that a number of photographers were incarcerated and put in shackles. As ‘Prohibition makes human beings more avid,’¹⁸ the more they impose restraints on this matter, the more that people would be eager and willing, and whatever they do, they cannot dissuade the people from their heartfelt desires. It is said that a woman paid ten *toṃan* for a photograph of Sattar Khan, looked at it, put it on the ground, placed her forehead on the photograph in prostration, smelled it, and kissed it.”¹⁹

He continues: “A number of photographers accused of printing and selling photographs of Sattar Khan were brought to Sabz-e Maydan [central square in front of the main bazaar in Tehran], beaten up and put in shackles.”²⁰ Elsewhere: “Yesterday, fourth of Sha‘ban (1326 hejreh) [1908], a number of Cossacks and Gens d’armes, carrying a warrant, searched photography studios and shops for photographs of MPs, confiscated the photographs, and placed a ban on their sale.”²¹

Mohammad-‘Ali Shah’s coup against the constitution began with the bombardment of the parliament on 1908 and was followed by protestors’ sit-ins on the grounds of foreign embassies. The group that partook in the sit-in at the Ottoman Embassy would regularly send photographs of their gatherings to their supporters outside the embassy walls. After viewing the photographs, one of the secret societies in Tehran responded defiantly giving words of advice as to how to take pictures that would better affect public opinion:

“A few days ago, a photograph of the protestors at the [Ottoman] embassy was brought to the meeting of patriots; everyone had groomed himself, dressed up, was orderly with cane in hand, and some comfortably seated and standing. It was very, very disappointing that the purpose of it was lost; it was as though a group had gone to the embassy to take part in a party and had taken a [souvenir] photograph. In this case, it is certain that this group will make great efforts to prepare dinner, lunch, milk, and eggs in the morning [and] in the evening. It would have been better if you gentlemen, who have been oppressed and out of urgency and fear as representatives of one nation of Islam, for the sake of regaining your usurped rights, to have turned [to] God for help from within and to pretend you

went to the embassy of the Islamic king of kings. It would be better not to pay attention to any authority. Suppose they had insisted on taking a photograph, it would have been better to take a group photograph, all in disarray and disheveled, with pale countenance, hands raised to the sky, eyes open to the sky, focused on God, calling His Name, and not paying any attention to the camera at all. If sounds and shouts could not be heard in a photograph, a few words describing the situation could have been written. That photograph could have been sold for five, ten, [or] twenty tomans and taken to Europe.”²²

These words are an indication of the appreciation of the usage of photographs for political propaganda.

Yet reactionary forces also used photographs to demonstrate their control of the tumultuous situation. Distributing photographs of jailed protestors in pitiful conditions is one example. One such detainee writes in his memoirs:

“In prison, they would give nothing but two pieces of bread and yellow cucumber to prisoners. With skins turned dark from the sun, long hair, and disfigurement, they would take pictures of us and given them as gifts to others.”²³



— 10: Political criminals, prisoners at the Bagh-e shah, imprisoned by Mohammad-'Ali Shah after the bombardment of the parliament, 1908, Qajar photo-albums at the Library of the Majles-e shura-ye eslami (Iranian Parliament), Tehran.

Judging from the appearance of the prisoners and the fact that these pictures were circulated publicly, one can surmise that this act was aimed at demoralizing the opposition groups (fig. 10).

Finally, the short-lived reign of Mohammad-'Ali Shah came to an end when the constitutionalists regained the capital city and he went into exile in 1909. One of the witnesses on his day of departure from Tehran writes: "Many foreigners were among the crowds, mostly journalists, taking photographs of the to and fro and the loadings of his possessions."²⁴ From the controversial photograph of Naus, the mass protests, sit-ins, military skirmishes, dead bodies strewn on the battlefields, public hangings, souvenir photographs of combatants, and anniversary celebrations commemorating the birth of the parliament, all became subjects to be photographed. As such, the documentary value of photography came to the forefront of its many applications during the constitutional period. Photographers had taken part in the political upheaval and played this part by documenting events. In retrospect, while examining the scope of subjects photographed and their wide circulation across the country during and after the Constitutional Revolution, one cannot help but remark that this socio-political event was indeed a seminal moment in Iranian photohistory (fig. 11).

Photohistorical research of the final years of the Qajar Dynasty (1909–1925) remains an open topic. Evidence indicates that court photography had declined. Of



— 11: A group of *mojahedin* (freedom fighters) of the cities of Rasht, Tabriz and Caucasus, 1909, unknown photographer, 1909, postcard.



— 12: A Street in Tehran during the reign of Ahmad Shah Qajar, c. 1918, private collection.

the total 1,040 photograph albums housed in the royal archives of Golestan Palace, spanning the reigns of four monarchs, only two belong to the last king, Ahmad Shah Qajar (r. 1909–1925). The chaotic state of affairs both within and beyond the palace walls, especially foreign interference and World War I (1914–1918), can be blamed for this demise. It must, however, be stressed that in large cities, such as Tabriz, Isfahan, and Shiraz, where the governors were relatives of the king, photography was pursued as seriously as at the royal court. Many of these photographs have survived and can be found in numerous government and private archives today.

Concurrently, the development of mass-produced cameras and their products, the importation and sale of these commodities in Tehran and other large Iranian cities, and the general acceptance of photography are further evidence of increased production in Iranian urban communities.²⁵ Newspaper advertisements for photographic paraphernalia and three reprints of the book *San'at-e 'akkasi* (The photographic industry) within the time span of 1916–1928, as the last teaching manual on photography published during the Qajar era,²⁶ is indicative of a significant number of self-taught photographers in need of a reference book. Family portraits taken in photography

studios increased during this period as well. Although women rarely posed in public studios with the rest of their family, fathers were eagerly photographed with their children, both boys and girls. However, public support for the establishment of modern schools, particularly for girls in Tehran, with an emphasis on teaching scientific skills, set the stage for the entry of photography into the curricula of a number of schools. An advertisement in the newspaper *Iran-e now* (Modern Iran) in 1910 states: “The Naseri Girls School [...] was inaugurated on 15 Rabi‘ al-avval. The courses taught are Persian, Arabic, Geography, Mathematics, French, and various skills, such as knitting, and photography is also taught.”²⁷

Judging from the many photographs in private collections, an increasing number of portable cameras were sold to wealthier members of society. Single and family portraits, leisure activities, and natural settings are examples of such photographs. A greater number of photographs depicting various social, cultural, and political aspects of city life from around the country can also be found. Researching the origins and development of photography in various cities is a field that requires further exploration (fig. 12). In addition, a systematic examination of photographs taken by foreign travelers visiting Iran from the time of Naser al-Din Shah to the end of the Qajar era which are spread in various libraries and private and official archives around the world has yet to be completed. Such a study could be beneficial for arriving at theoretical precepts of Iranian photohistory.

Overall, Iranian photography during the later years of the Qajar era underwent various technical and aesthetic changes. The demise of court photography, the changes in people’s outlooks on taking photographs, the possibility of taking photographs with personal cameras, flash photography in studios, and changes in the methods of presenting studio photographs are only a few examples. Changes in appearances and cultural conditions²⁸ over a seventy year span from the early years of photography in Iran up to the growing presence of photography in the lives of people, paved the way for photography to enter family gatherings. The eighty-three-year heritage of Qajar-era photography, due to the continuity of the photographers’ activities and prevalent technical methods employed, carried on in form and in style for at least the first five years of the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925–1979). However, with changing social and political conditions Iranian photography entered a different stage from that point onward: the development of press photography in accordance with the advent of new weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines; documentary photography of events; development and construction projects in the country; the expansion of photography studios and the general desire to take photographs; new photographic technology and the emergence of simple, handheld cameras that anyone could use; inexpensive access to photography; and the willingness to take more photographic portraits of oneself and of one’s family.

NOTES

- 1 For a detailed treatment of the entry of daguerreotype technology into Iran, see Adle 2001, 84.
- 2 *Ruznameh-ye vaqaye'-e ettefaqiyeh* 1857, III, 2295.
- 3 For early references to daguerreotype photography in Iran before c. 1850, see Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 207–212; and Tahmasbpour, “Kashf-e nokhostin.”
- 4 This may have been due to the improper storage of daguerreotypes, which were highly susceptible to corrosion if not sealed behind glass.
- 5 Kianfar, *Ruznahmeh*, I, 433.
- 6 He went on to achieve higher posts and was often referred to as “Aqa Reza Eqbal al-Saltaneh.”
- 7 Tahmasbpour, *Az nuqreh va nur*, 18.
- 8 The development of certain photographic practices in Iran support this conjecture, in particular documentary photography as attested by the photoreportages that have reached us today from the early years of photography in Iran. These include the royal decree by Naser al-Din Shah instructing Jules Richard to photograph the ruins at Persepolis in 1850, and the mission of the ill-fated photographer Henri Couliboeuf de Blocqueville, who was arrested and held hostage while photographing the war with the Turcomans on the northeastern frontier in 1860. For further information on the topic, see Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 41–47.
- 9 The court secretary E'temad al-Saltaneh writes: “This technique, which is a branch of natural sciences, took ground during this period and found wide circulation [...] and today, the number of practitioners and photographic studios in the capitol city of Tehran and other provinces [...] has reached a high point.” E'temad al-Saltaneh, *al-Mo'aser*, quoted in Afshar, *Chehel sal*, 130–131.
- 10 See Tahmasbpour, “Creative Photography.”
- 11 This article treats only court photographers and those photographers active in Tehran.
- 12 The existence of a number of teaching manuals and their multiple editions during the later years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign is indicative of an increasing demand in this area. *Majmu'at al-sanaye'*, *Honar amuz*, *'Elm-e 'akkasi*, and *San'at-e 'akkasi* are examples of such books that were reprinted more than four times. See Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 198–205.
- 13 Tahmasbpour, *Az nuqreh va nur*, 45–67.
- 14 Due to the suppression of constitutional struggles, secret societies of the constitutional period emerged and were many.
- 15 Kermani, *Tarikh-e bidari*, V, 139.
- 16 Producing multiple copies of and selling photographs, especially those of high-ranking members of society, religious figures, and the European travels of the king had been an acceptable practice for quite some time. A favored courtier of Naser al-Din Shah, 'Aziz al-Soltan (Malijak), writes in his memoirs: “Sunday 6 of Ramadan 1320 [...]. We came to the bookbinder bazaar [...] and bought a number of photographs of the second trip of the king [Naser al-Din Shah] to Europe.” 'Aziz al-Soltan, *Ruznahmeh*, I, 323.
- 17 The prime minister to Mozaffar al-Din Shah at the time, 'Ayn al-Dowleh, had insisted that the courtier should not deliver his report to the king as he was in frail health and would die of a heart attack. See Ja'farian, *Bast neshini*, II, 236.
- 18 Translated from Arabic.
- 19 Baghmisheh'i, *Ruznameh*, 270.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 271.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 252.
- 22 Kashani, *Vaqhe'at*, I, 316–317.

- 23 Sayyah, *Khaterat*, III, 599.
- 24 ‘Aziz al-Soltan, *Ruznameh*, II, 1619.
- 25 In his memoirs, ‘Aziz al-Soltan was an avid photographer, and we can read about his friendship with other photographers and his many visits to stores selling photographic paraphernalia in Tehran, particularly from Mozaffar al-Din Shah’s reign onward. For this topic, see ‘Aziz al-Soltan *Ruznahmeh*, V, 124–585; and Tahmasbpour/Mohammadi Nameghi, “Malijak.” For advertisements of photographic paraphernalia in Tehran and other cities in newspapers of the time, *Ruznameh-ye vaqaye-e ettefaqiye* 1857, III, 2294–2295.
- 26 Translated by the pharmacist Paparian, first published in Tehran, 1333/1915.
- 27 *Iran-e now* 1910, 1.
- 28 Interesting documented examples of the changes in social conditions and the cultural fabric of Iranian society can be found in photographs of this period. The nineteenth-century painted backdrops give way to dark or light curtains or light halos/hues behind sitters’ head. Similarly one can observe widespread changes in clothes as well.

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- 2: The Guimet Museum for Asian Arts in Paris, Persian album, Photo No. AP11166.
- 3: University of Tehran Central Library, Tehran.
- 4: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, (Albumkhane) Album No. 214.
- 5: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, (Albumkhane) Album No. 142.
- 6: Archives of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies of Iran (IICHs), Tehran, Aa1-04630-00.
- 7: Archives of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies of Iran (IICHs), Tehran.
- 8: Archives of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies of Iran (IICHs), Tehran, Aa1_01287_00.
- 10: Qajar photo-albums at the Library of the *Majlis-e shorā-ye islami* (Iranian Parliament), Tehran, Album No. 12.

GEOGRAPHIES TRACED AND HISTORIES TOLD:
PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION OF LAND AND PEOPLE
BY ‘ABDOLLAH MIRZA QAJAR, 1880s–1890s

The photographic archives of the Golestan Palace in Tehran, known as *Albumkhaneh* (House of Albums), was largely compiled during the long reign of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–1896). He is considered to be the driving force behind the unique development and the subsequent manifold applications of the medium of photography in Iran; thus, this well-preserved archive with its tremendous sources contains a number of photograph albums,¹ which were predominantly ordered by the king and the central authorities, to investigate geopolitically significant regions in northern and northeastern Iranian territories by photographic means. In a related vein, from 1883 to 1896 the photographer ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar (1850–1912) was frequently assigned to undertake photographic expeditions to the peripheral domains and politically-unstable border regions in order to investigate their administrations, populations, military facilities, and political incidents, as well as geographical conditions and local particularities.

By referencing these significant, yet largely unexplored photograph albums, this paper argues for a twofold objective of the photographic expeditions to the northern and northeastern regions of the Qajar dominions: the accumulation of knowledge and the assertion of power. Firstly, such enterprises constituted an agency in constructing “geographical imaginations”² and creating multifaceted layers of knowledge of local conditions by virtue of photographs. From its inception, photography proved to be an efficient technological tool with a claim to accuracy and objectivity and capable of rapidly producing an enormous body of knowledge. The photographic documentation of Iranian domains served a similar purpose, having been employed by the Qajar authorities to create an immediate imperial memory. Secondly, the unveiled observations made through photographing the Iranian territories, such as Astarabad, Gorgan, and Khorasan, served to assert the power of the central authorities, hence an attempt to control politically-turbulent regions. Due to the regions’ strategic importance—it was possible to reach India overland that way—these areas had for many decades been venues of colonial intrigues and military interventions, predominantly led by tsarist Russia and Great Britain.³ In the time leading up to these events, Iran

had already lost parts of its northern territories to Russia and was forced by Great Britain to renounce its claim on the eastern regions that were formerly under Iranian control. Simultaneously, the central government was entangled in enduring turmoil, rivalry, and conflict with tribes and local rulers who claimed power. Faced with this twofold threat—colonial powers questioning the local sovereignty of Iran on one side and the fragile loyalty of the tribes and local rulers on the other—the central government endeavored to re-establish its authority in these areas. Indeed, the usage of the power-exerting gaze of the camera to observe regions of political significance can be considered as part of a political agenda to articulate and to reassert authority in these places. Scholars have extensively discussed how photographic technologies expand “human powers by observation and extend the range of observable space.”⁴ I argue, therefore, that the objective of the immediate observation of Iranian domains by photographic means was further to underpin the power of the central authorities.

The twofold objective of such photographic expeditions to the specified Iranian domains is exemplified through the case study of Album 298, preserved in the photographic archives of Golestan Palace. It is a compelling task to elaborate on this significant photograph album as a single, entire unit, to decode and appreciate its underlying narrative and the knowledge concealed in the photographs that jointly work to create a coherent visual map. With regard to the album itself, questions, such as the following are addressed: How is geographical space with its social diversity and political complexity conceptually arranged and communicated within a visual narrative in Album 298? What meaning does each photograph provide, and what narrative is constructed by their arrangement and contextualization within the album? How does the text, supplemented as captions to the photographs, correspond reciprocally to the images to enrich spatial experiences? A further focus of this paper is how vernacular realities were visualized within this particular photograph album.

WHO NARRATED BEHIND THE APPARATUS?

From 1883 to 1896, the photographer ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar was frequently entrusted with photographic expeditions by order of Naser al-Din Shah and by his close confidant Mirza ‘Ali-Asghar Khan Amin al-Soltan (1843–1907). The latter was first appointed Minister of Court and subsequently occupied various positions, including Minister of the Interior and the Office of Treasury, Customs and Royal Granaries. Thereafter in 1886, by taking over various tasks and responsibilities, Amin al-Soltan advanced to the position of the Premiership, thus numbering among the most influential politicians of the Naseri era.⁵ Recognizing his exceptional position at the court, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar approached Amin al-Soltan upon returning from his studies in Europe to offer his services to the Qajar court.⁶

'Abdollah Mirza Qajar was born in 1850 as the son of Jahangir Mirza, a member of the Qajar royal family. He died in 1912 in Tehran.⁷ As Zoka' has outlined, his professional life, was closely linked to the college of Dar al-Fonun (established in 1851).⁸ It was already during his studies that 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar developed a special interest in printing and photography, and he gathered his first experiences in darkrooms applying this new technology. Around 1878, together with a group of graduates of Dar al-Fonun, 'Abdollah Mirza was sent to Paris by 'Ali-Qoli Mirza E'tezad al-Saltaneh (1819–1880), the director of the Dar al-Fonun and the Minister of Sciences. On his return to Iran in 1883, 'Abdollah Mirza was appointed teacher of photography at Dar al-Fonun and worked at the *Akkashaneh-ye mobarakeh-ye homayuni* (Royal Photography Studio).

According to his own account,⁹ 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar spent about a year and a half in Paris, learning photography and the art of retouching photographs before he left for Austria to commence further studies. In Vienna, he was advised by Fritz Luckhardt (1843–1894), the court photographer and the First Secretary of the Photographic Society in Vienna, to study at the *Kaiserliche-Königliche Staatsgewerbeschule* (Imperial-Royal State Vocational School) in Salzburg. This School had been founded in 1876, and its Department of Photography and Reproduction Techniques was established a year later. From 1880 onward, the department was headed by the chemist and photographer Anton Czurda (1840–1916),¹⁰ to whom 'Abdollah Qajar was introduced at the very beginning of his stay in Salzburg. At the college, he commenced comprehensive studies in photography and reproduction techniques, which consisted of basic subjects, theoretical lectures, and practical exercises covering a range of innovative technical procedures.¹¹ In the annual report of the Imperial-Royal State Vocational School in Salzburg, it is recorded that "Abdollah M. from Tehran as a student of photography and reproduction technique" had studied there. He was enrolled in courses from the winter semester 1881/1882 to the summer semester 1882/1883.¹² Further testimony of his studies is provided by the annex of the college's fourth annual report, published after the school year 1882/1883. It lists all former graduates who invested in Austrian products once they had returned to their homelands. Position 22 of the report states: "Abdollah-Mirza, prince of Persia, is currently establishing graphic arts in Tehran for the fabrication of government bonds. The complete equipment for this purpose is acquired from Austria. The value of the first acquisition amounts to 20,000 francs."¹³ Shortly after his return to Tehran, 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar was assigned to introduce the techniques and reproduction procedures that he had learned during his stay abroad. As mentioned in 'Abdollah Mirza's own account, upon visiting the print house Naser al-Din Shah ordered the purchase of items of printing equipment,¹⁴ which most probably are those listed in the fourth annual report.

Very soon after its announcement in 1839, photography was regarded as an instrument that enables one to see, discover, and familiarize oneself with the world. In accordance with this conception, the Qajar authorities applied photography very

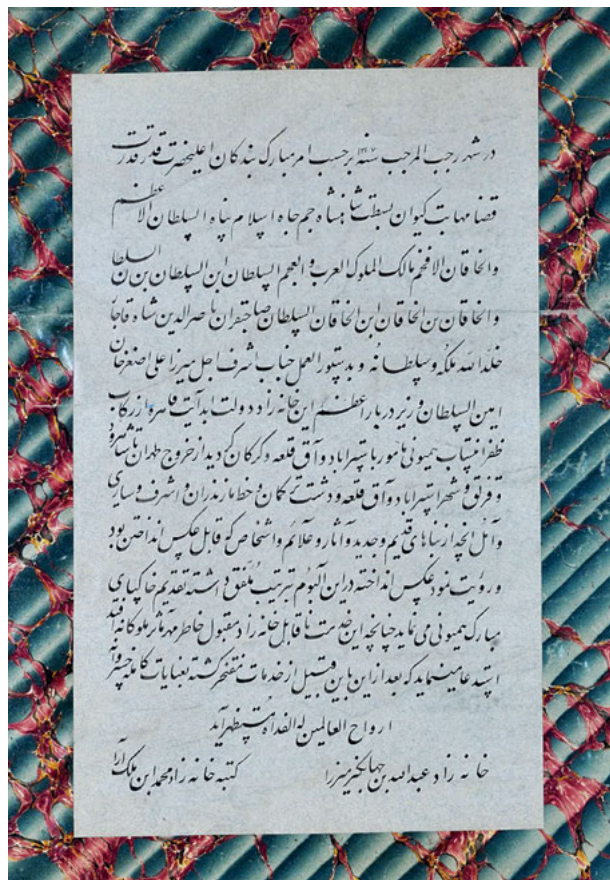
early on as an agent to build knowledge, to deduce processes of changes visually and conceptually, and to “capture” surroundings that were in continuous flux. Hence, once in the service of the royal authority, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar was soon assigned to photograph the northeastern province of Khorasan in 1883. Album 296 in the *Albumkhaneh*, which according to its reference page was compiled by ‘Abdollah Qajar, contains some of his photographs from that expedition.¹⁵

Occasionally ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar accompanied Amin al-Soltan on expeditions. For example, in 1886 ‘Abdollah Mirza photographed the municipal renovations and urban planning developments supervised by Amin al-Soltan. These photographs are assembled with other photographs from the surrounding infrastructure of the region in Album 208, preserved in the photographic archives of the Golestan Palace. The initial photographic expeditions conducted by ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar encompassed diverse regions of the Qajar dominions, e.g., the expedition in 1887, devoted to depicting archaeological and historical sites that stretched from Tabriz to Shiraz.¹⁶ By contrast, later expeditions were restricted to the northern and northeastern provinces, and, in particular, to their border regions. In 1889, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar undertook an expedition to the northern regions that bordered Russian territories and to the southeastern coastal regions of the Caspian Sea. This ten-month expedition is probably best explained by the importance of this region to the central authority. On one hand, this area had become the home domain of the Qavanlu clan of the Qajars after its resettlement during the Safavid Period (1501–1736). As Astarabad was the birthplace of the founder of the Qajar dynasty Agha Mohammad Khan (r. 1789–1797), it was considered to be the cradle of the Qajar Dynasty (1786–1925). On the other hand this border region to the Russian territories, though geopolitically significant, was constantly unstable. The photographs from this expedition are assembled in Album 298, which will be discussed in detail later.

In the following year, 1890, the destination was the similarly important eastern border domain of Khorasan. The photographs taken during this expedition, extending from Sarakhs northward along the frontier of Russian Transcaspia to Kalat-e Naderi, Lotfabad, and Darragaz, were arranged in Album 240. ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar assembled 150 photographs on 135 pages and added detailed comments to the depicted motifs in 1893. It is noteworthy that the second-to-last page of the album refers to an official command issued by the king to the local administration.¹⁷ According to this, Naser al-Din Shah equipped the photographer ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar with a personal order to guarantee his security during the expedition to the frontier. This order further specified that all the locations were to be photographed and issued distinct advice to photograph everything that may be thought worthwhile by the photographer. Furthermore, Naser al-Din Shah ordered the local authorities to guard and to accompany the photographer wherever he investigated, as well as to support him in fulfilling his photographic report and documenting the local conditions. As this

order vividly illustrates, the photographer 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar was acting as an official legate of the central authority.

The following photographic expedition to the province of Khorasan in 1895 is documented in Album 291, which contains 177 photographs on 153 pages. The introductory page of this photograph album sheds light on the investigated domains. In addition to the major cities of Mashhad, Quchan and Bojnord, relevant villages and places along the frontier of Russian Transcaspia, such as Darragaz, Zurabad, Kalat-e Naderi, and Sarakhs were extensively explored. Indeed, the photographer 'Abdollah



— 1: Introductory page to Album 298, containing the precise assignment for the photographic expedition to Astarabad, 'Aq Qal'eh, and Gorgan, written by the Calligrapher Mohammad Ebn Malek Ara, 1307/1890, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

Mirza Qajar once again documented the same border area that he had photographed during his last expedition. It should be noted that the main motifs depicted in this expedition were local facilities, especially post and telegraphy offices, caravanserais, mines, and military camps along the immediate frontier, as well as local tribal leaders and provincial governors.¹⁸ This album was compiled three years after the expedition. During his final photographic expedition in the service of the Qajar administration in 1896, 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar once again accompanied the grand vizier Amin al-Soltan to Qom and Kashan to photograph holy sites and contemporary urban architecture. During this expedition, 'Abdollah Mirza was further instructed to document a set of precious objects from the holy shrine in Qom, together with various valuable carpets from the mausoleum thought to be of the Safavid ruler Shah 'Abbas I in Kashan.¹⁹ Such commissioned photographic campaigns aptly demonstrate how photography came to be a proper tool for the Qajar administration to collect facts, to create a comprehensive inventory, and what is more, to construct an imperial memory.

After the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar remained in the service of the Qajar administration, holding important offices, such as head of the Royal Printing Office. However, there is no evidence that he conducted similar photographic expeditions on behalf of the next ruler, Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1896–1907). More research needs to be conducted on the extent to which, during his reign, Mozaffar al-Din Shah paid attention to the uses of photography in support of his political agenda, to construct and to enhance the royal photographic archive as an imperial memory, as his predecessor Naser al-Din Shah had so notably done. It is apparent, however, that photographic expeditions to northern and northeastern Iranian territories were no longer ordered with systematic rigour, even though there are two instances of such campaigns in 1901/1902. Compiled in Album 403 and Album 405, both of which are preserved in the *Albumkhaneh*,²⁰ these expeditions reveal photographs of Astarabad and its surroundings, military facilities, exercises and manoeuvres, Cossack regiments, and tribal leaders. There were also two notable photographic expeditions to the southwest of Iran. Mozaffar al-Din Shah ordered Dr. Haydar Mirza Shahrokhshahi, a physician who was also occasionally active as an amateur photographer, and the military officer Amir Khan-e Jalil al-Dowleh Qajar to document archaeological excavations and the construction of roads in Lurestan and Khuzestan, respectively. When Mozaffar al-Din Shah signed a supplementary treaty granting France further excavations in Susa, Haydar Mirza travelled in the company of Jacques de Morgan (1857–1924) and a group of French archaeologists to the excavation area. Haydar Mirza assembled photographs of the excavations in Album 137 preserved in the *Albumkhaneh*. Amir Khan-e Jalil al-Dowleh Qajar accompanied 'Abd al-Majid Mirza 'Ayn al-Dowleh, the *vali* (governor) of Lorestan and Khuzestan from 1899 to 1901, to these provinces. During a one-year photographic expedition in 1900–1901, he made numerous photographs of these areas and their surroundings.²¹

PICTURING IRAN

By the time of the first photographic campaign undertaken by 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar in 1883, photography had already been deployed in manifold spheres of application in Iran. By then, photographic expeditions to historic monuments, holy sites, and Iranian cities had taken place and were no longer a novelty. Further, pictorial reports of political events and royal activities were widespread. However, the photographic expeditions conducted by 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar eminently differed from their predecessors through their objectives and highly systematic ways of exploration; hence, they added novel dimensions to the function and meaning of photography during the Naseri era. In what follows, this claim will be evaluated and examined in detail.

Leading scholars on the early history of Iranian photography have explored the first documentary applications of photography in Iran entrusted by Naser al-Din Shah to Jules Richard (1816–1891) in 1850 and to Henri de Couliboeuf de Blocqueville in 1860.²² The former was commissioned to carry out the photographic documentation of the archaeological site of Persepolis, and the latter to make a pictorial report of the Iranian campaign against the Turkomans. For various reasons, both expeditions were unsuccessful. It still needs to be investigated to what extent, if at all, the young monarch Naser al-Din Shah was aware of the photographic expeditions to great antiquities and religious sites, e.g. the expeditions to Egypt in 1839 by Frédéric Goupil Fesquet (1817–1878), in 1849–50 by Maxime Du Camp (1822–1894) or in 1851–1852 by Félix Teynard (1817–1892), and between 1853–1855 by John Green (1832–1856) as well as those to Palestine in 1853–1854 by Auguste Salzmann (1824–1872) and James Graham (1806–1869).²³ Similarly, there is no clear evidence regarding the king's familiarity with the documentation of campaigns, such as the Crimean War (1853–1856) by Roger Fenton (1819–1869) in 1855 or the Second Italian War of Independence in 1859. Yet growing familiarity with related photographic practices promoted the usage of photography as an instrument to create an imperial memory. Starting from the 1860s, photography was employed in transferring knowledge, both in its function of codifying the past and in constructing the meaning of the present. This application of photography is aptly exemplified by the various photographic expeditions conducted first by Europeans and thereafter commonly by Iranians themselves.

The first photographic expeditions to Iranian archaeological sites and holy places were undertaken toward the end of the 1850s. After several brief photographic surveys, the Italian officer Luigi Pesce (1827–1864) conducted an expedition to historic monuments in Persepolis, the tomb of Ciro in Pasargadae, the rupestrian tombs, and the inscriptions of Naqsh-e Rostam. Afterwards, in 1858, he dedicated a photograph album to Naser al-Din Shah as a testimony to the ancient Persian Empire. Similarly, during a military mission to Khorasan in 1858 and 1859, Antonio Giannuzzi (1818–1876) documented religious places and monumental sites along the pilgrim

trails running from Tehran to the holy city of Mashhad. Lastly, while accompanying a diplomatic delegation of the newly founded Italian Kingdom to Iran in 1862, Luigi Montabone (1828–1887) and his assistant Alberto Pietrobon (1862–1887) compiled an album that constructed a visual history and a topographical report of Iran and presented it to the Iranian court.²⁴

Shortly after these European-led photographic campaigns, the official travels of Naser al-Din Shah were increasingly illustrated photographically.²⁵ The oldest such photographic documentation dates to 1859. During a royal visit to the provinces of Zanzan and Azerbaijan in 1859–1860, the court photographer Agha Reza 'Akkasbashi (1843–1890) and the king's personal photography teacher Frances Carlhian (1818–1870) compiled Album 679 as a documentation of this journey.²⁶ It included two photographs of archaeological finds on the way to Khorreh, a village located 225 km southwest of Tehran where Naser al-Din Shah had ordered excavations shortly before. This photographic documentation opened a conceptual space for honouring the past, making it visually accessible to the present. According to the photohistorian Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour, photography was also used to record pleasure trips, hunting events, and summer residences of Naser al-Din Shah from the 1860s onward. Within a short time such pictorial reports were not restricted to royal camps and the routes the ruler was taking on trips; rather, during these events, photographers were sent to nearby places to explore local peculiarities which Naser al-Din Shah was eager to know about and to depict wondrous things he had heard about.²⁷ Furthermore, a seven-month campaign during 1869 along the pilgrimage route to the holy cities in Ottoman Iraq aimed at photographing the routes, accommodations, and other facilities points to the multifaceted uses of a photographic expedition. It can be regarded as preparation for the imminent pilgrimage of Naser al-Din Shah and his mother Mahd-e 'Olya (1805–1873).²⁸ It is beyond the scope of this article to explore in detail the evolution of documentary photography in its formative period in Iran. Nevertheless, photography had already been injected into the conceptual repertoire of transferring knowledge and creating visual memory by the time that 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar appeared at the court and entered into the service of Naser al-Din Shah following his stay in Europe. 'Abdollah Mirza's profound technological knowledge and his personal loyalty to Naser al-Din Shah as a member of the Qajar family made him especially well suited to map the Iranian domains visually and to observe geopolitically-important regions on the orders of the royal authority.

GUARDED DOMAINS²⁹—A PHOTOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

Album 298 in the photographic archives of Golestan Palace in Tehran contains 165 photographs. It is bound in a lemon-yellow velvet cover measuring 37 × 33.5 cm.³⁰ The photographs were taken by 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar in 1306–1307/1889–1890 during a



— 2: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Self-Portrait taken during the Expedition in Astarabad, 1307/1890, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

journey to Astarabad, 'Aq Qal'eh, and Gorgan—the northern border region of the Iranian domains. Like many other commissioned photograph albums compiled by 'Abdollah Qajar, Album 298 includes an introductory text composed by the photographer himself that conveys detailed information about the expedition. Here, he mentions that the photographic expedition was ordered by Naser al-Din Shah and arranged by Mirza 'Ali-Ashgar Khan Amin al-Soltan. Furthermore, the introductory page provides detailed knowledge about when the expedition was undertaken, what the precise assignment was, and which areas were intended to be investigated with the camera. The author even describes the route taken, the important places visited, and the motifs photographed. The page concludes with the names of the photographer 'Abdollah Ebn Jahangir Mirza (fig. 1) and of the calligrapher Mohammad Ebn Malek Ara.

At first sight, the dates of the expedition appear contradictory: in the introductory page to the album it is dated to Rajab 1307 *hejreh* (February/March 1890), but the caption of the last photograph dates it to Rajab 1306 *hejreh* (March 1889). It is likely that the latter refers to the beginning of the expedition and the former to the date when the album was composed. As the caption of the last photograph indicates, the expedition lasted ten months (fig. 2). This conforms to the two deviating dates provided before. Further evidence for the date of the expedition is provided by the photographs themselves: they depict events that occurred in 1889.

Each photograph in Album 298 is arranged one per page and framed with crossing, gilded lines. At the bottom, the photograph is furnished with an individual tripartite caption written in a well-proportioned and aesthetically appealing *nasta'liq* script. The right part points to the "Photography Studio of the Royal College of Dar al-Fonun," while the left part states, "Dar al-Khelafeh-ye Naseri"³¹—the designation of Tehran in the nineteenth century—and the photographer "'Abdollah Qajar, the Descendant of the House [of Qajar]." The central part of the caption is devoted to providing detailed information about the depicted motif and unfailingly conveys the geographic specifications. The photographs in Album 298, thanks to their chronological arrangement, portray a narrative of the expedition, making the "geographical imagination" along the travel route visually and conceptually accessible. In steadily adding portraits of provincial governors, the geographical space is accentuated with the respective political landmarks. Elaborately designed as cabinet cards, these portraits, e.g. the portrait of the governor of Semnan and Damghan, E'tezad al-Molk (fig. 3), are distinguished from the other photographs in the album by their unique format. They thus come to function in the midst of the visual-spatial narrative as landmarks for the respective geographical-political districts.

The chronological arrangement of the album allows a reconstruction of the itinerary of the photographer. In this expedition, 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar follows a primary route from Tehran to the holy city of Mashhad that was frequently used by traders,



— 3: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Portrait of E'tezad al-Molk, Governor of Semnan and Damghan, 1306/1889, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran. — 4: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Governor of Astarabad, Amir Khan Sardar, holding a Meeting with Yamut Chieftains, 1306/1889, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.



postal transports, and pilgrims.³² Accordingly, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar passed by province capitals, flourishing cities and villages, postal offices, and caravanserais until he reached a military camp on the Abr plain. On this plain, he encountered the regiments of the Iranian army and the cavalries of the nomadic tribes settled in Khorasan, facing representatives of the Yamut tribe for negotiations. This gathering was precipitated by the unrest in the nomadic areas of the Yamut, an area immediately bordering Russia.

According to statements made by George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925), who traveled in Iran between 1889 and 1890, the rebellion of the Yamut tribe began in February 1888, and the dispute could not be settled until March 1889.³³ The national border agreed upon with Russia, which ran along the river Atrak, was a significant element to this conflict, for it split the Turkoman Yamut tribe into those who were subject to the Russian authorities and the Iranian Yamuts living south of the river. The recalcitrance of the latter led to rebellion. This posed a serious threat to the Qajar authorities and demanded an army of about 130,000 soldiers finally to quell it. ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar was a witness to these political events unfolding on the Abr plain, during which the governors and commanders of the Iranian army, various tribe leaders, including those of Hazara, Osanlu, Afshar, and Qara Qoyunlu settled in the northeastern Iranian provinces, and members of the Yamut tribes clashed with each other. At the focal point of the negotiations, Amir Khan Sardar Sayf al-Molk, the governor of the province of Astarabad, held a meeting with the chieftains of various group of the Yamut tribe (fig. 4). In his role as the commander of the Astarabad regiments, Amir Khan Sardar had ordered the Yamut leaders to the Abr plain to discuss the conditions for the release of captives.

Album 298 contains two photographs of captives. The one taken on the borders of the Katul plain shows a group of prisoners, consisting of men, women, and even children, sitting in a row before a Yamut tent, while some Yamut nomads gaze at them (fig. 5). I consider it certain that this is the same group of prisoners mentioned by Naser al-Din Shah in his memoirs.³⁴ There he reports that on his return from Astarabad on September 25th, 1889 (20 Moharram, 1307), Sayf al-Molk brought seven prisoners from the Ataba’i tribe to Tehran. After Naser al-Din Shah ordered this group of captives to be released and accompanied back to their tribe, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar likely crossed paths with them on their way to the nomadic area of Ataba’i in the Gorgan region.

From the Abr plain, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar crossed the mountain passes to reach the province of Astarabad in September 1889 (Moharram 1307). Astarabad was equally afflicted by tensions and unrest between the tribes and the local authorities on the one hand and between the latter and the central government on the other. More pressingly, this province obtained a surge in geopolitical relevance, because the province of Astarabad was considered indispensable to reach India via the land route.³⁵

camps and amenities. Nevertheless, through the numerous photographs of post offices, caravanserais, telegraph offices, transport routes, and bridges, special emphasis is placed on the themes of communication, transport, and logistics. The variety in the depicted personalities is similarly rich, ranging from those in high positions holding important political or military offices, to local administrators, soldiers or tribal cavalry, ordinary people, and even prisoners. A considerable number of photographs relate to political proceedings and military interventions. In addition to this entire multitude, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar documented popular traditions and extraordinary phenomena that he encountered during his travels. It becomes obvious that ‘Abdollah Mirza attempted to record any impressions that may have been of importance to the king and to the central administration.

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Thus far, this paper has briefly discussed the early photographic documentation of the Iranian domains. It has touched on the role that both European and indigenous photographers played in visualizing monumental sites and in producing pictorial reports. This paper then sketched the conditions and circumstances under which ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar was entrusted with photographic expeditions by the king. A discussion of the conditions for ‘Abdollah Qajar’s photographic expedition of 1889–1890 and the narrative running through Album 298, which was compiled after this expedition, opens up the question: What was the motivation behind such photographic expeditions? In what follows, a theoretical framework surrounding this question will be outlined to explain the twofold purpose of such undertakings: (a) to map the visible world, and (b) to act as surveillance of unstable territories as part of a political agenda.

Joan Schwartz and James Ryan have elaborated impressively on how photography expressed a certain way to behold and become acquainted with the world.³⁶ From its very inception, photography accordingly advanced to a powerful medium in grappling and coming to terms with the world. In a multiplicity of ways, photography functions as a kind of memory, which evokes a “real” experience of places and geographical locations. Photography manifests an unprecedented technological possibility to promote “geographical imaginations.” Specifically, it enables the creation of a realistic image of nature in a direct and rapid manner, thereby extending the human capacity for observation and the spectrum of observed locations.³⁷

Its function to accumulate and extend comprehensive knowledge meant that photography fit in with the definitive trend of the nineteenth century: collecting and classifying the things of the world. The facts given by such knowledge accumulation decisively and pervasively shape and control the perception of surrounding, as well

as distant, geographical areas. For long periods of the nineteenth century photography was understood prevalently as an ideologically neutral medium in the construction of geographical knowledge. However, with the rise of numerous different forms of visualization, this understanding soon came into question.³⁸ This process led to investigations concerning patterns of the exercise of authority through the visualization of space and location, which exemplified the ambiguity of the photographic medium. On the one hand, photography rests on the assumption that it produces an exact rendering and impartial portrayal of the visible world. On the other hand, photography is deeply intertwined with the subjectivity inherently implied in the necessary decisions regarding the object to be recorded, from which angle, the point of time, the purpose of recording, and the intended message.³⁹

In this vein, Gillian Rose⁴⁰ argues for the involvement of an ideological framework in the construction of a geographical landscape. The importance of a landscape, Rose argues, depends on the cultural codex of the society. This codex is embedded within social power structures and abstracts from the relationship between culture and society. Photography, as a product of socially-specific encounters between human and human or human and nature, consequently adopts the role of a powerful mediator that becomes imperceptibly entangled in the relationship between the observer and material reality.⁴¹

There is no doubt that the meaning and function of photography, and accordingly discourses on photography related to the nineteenth-century nation states of Europe, cannot simply be transposed onto the different social and cultural context of a pre-modern Iran. Nevertheless, many modes of applying photography were in line with the political agenda of Iran at the time, specifically its strive for modernity. For example, as Abigail Solomon-Godeau has so aptly pointed out, photography was not just suited—it was an agent *par excellence*—to nineteenth-century empiricism and the passion for “listing, knowing, and possessing.”⁴² In this vein, facts are gathered and classified in pursuit of comprehensive knowledge or in the conduct of imperial administration. In spite of the different context, photography thus opened new paths in Iran for collecting and controlling knowledge. This becomes apparent in considering the construction of the Royal Photography Library and the extensive photographic expeditions undertaken.

This brief theoretical framework illustrates the interconnection between the accumulation of knowledge and the exertion of power. Furthermore, it accentuates the veiled, powerful role of the medium of photography in the relationship between observer and observed world. Drawing on the photographs from Album 298, the two-fold purpose expressed through this intertwined relationship will be discussed as applied to the photographic expeditions carried out by 'Abdollah Qajar within the Iranian domains.



— 6: ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Panorama of the Village Qeshlaq, 1306/1889, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

MAPPING THE IRANIAN DOMAINS

One of the first destinations of the photographic expedition recorded in Album 298 was the village Qeshlaq. This village is situated near the capital of the Qajar state at an important bifurcation of routes. One is the most important trade and pilgrimage route to eastern Iran, and the other leads across a mountain pass, the famous Caspian Gates, to the north of Iran. The supplemented comment on the image (fig. 6) determines the geographical locus and adds relevant administrative information:

“Panorama of Qeshlaq, which is one of the important villages of Khavar and is situated on the path of caravans. [This village] has an old fortress, and within and outside the fortress, there live about 80 families.”

Even today the village Qeshlaq, whose name refers to its function as preferred winter quarters, and which now has about 180 inhabitants, can be reached via this route.⁴³



— 7: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Panorama of Lasjard, 1306/1889, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

During the rule of the Qajar Dynasty, the village of Qeshlaq was crown property and responsible for supplying the royal stables at Tehran with grain and fodder. Qeshlaq belonged to the district of Khavar, which was quite often mentioned in travel reports, renown as one of the granaries of North Iran.⁴⁴

Standing on top of the roofs, 'Abdollah Qajar gazed into the distance to photograph a panorama of a rural area. A variety of photographs of small villages of local importance can be seen in most of 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar's albums. This is the case for Album 298, as well. Important information is contained within the captions that complement the photographs in this album, a feature common to most of 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar's photograph albums. These comments point out the geographical positions, distances to other locations, fortifications, condition of the villages, possessions, and populations. The captions quite often contain further indications about trade, agriculture, climate, reservoirs, irrigation systems, or other local characteristic features.

For instance, the caption of the photograph showing the panorama of Lasjard describes secret rooms in which the villagers of Lasjard found refuge in turbulent days (fig. 7). They were even able to hide their harvest and animals there for some time, while blocking the accesses to these rooms. It is remarkable that ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar spared no effort and conducted intensive investigations to gain this kind of specific information, which may have been useful for the central government. The corresponding caption indicates how he explored these paths to secret rooms and how difficult the way through the tunnel was.⁴⁵

The individual photographs of the villages and fortresses provide visual references from which a contemporaneous socio-political map could be constructed. John Brian Harley calls this type of mapping an “exercise of political power.”⁴⁶ He further underlines that mapping was employed by early modern European societies as a crucial contribute to the preservation of the authority of the central state, particularly in regard to its national borders, commerce, internal administration, controlling the population, colonies, and military strength. Harley remarks on mapping: “In all these cases maps are linked to what Foucault called the exercise of ‘juridical power.’ The map becomes a ‘juridical territory’: it facilitates surveillance and control.”⁴⁷ Hence, mapping was a state function, being centralized and bureaucratically exerted. In this light the visual mapping of Iranian territories can be considered an attempt to modernize the state and thereby strengthen the position of the central authority.

In addition to the photographs of villages and fortresses, various photographs of the cities and towns along the expedition route supported the geographic mapping of the investigated domains. The depictions range from townscape to historic sites, religious places, and contemporary urban architecture, e.g., the north portal of Semnan (fig. 8). The civil fortress of Semnan, located on the major trade route from Tehran to Mashhad, prospered economically, as well as politically, during the Qajar dynasty. The northern portal was built as part of the citadel on the orders of Baha’ al-Dowleh, the thirty-seventh son of Fath-‘Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797–1834) and was completed in 1885 under Ziya’ al-Dowleh Anushirvan Mirza (1833–1899). The portal depicted is adorned with outstanding examples of Qajar tile craft displaying floral motifs and rich pictorial iconography, referring to Iranian, as well as European themes, as was usual for this period.⁴⁸

The photographer is positioned centrally in front of the northern portal to create a symmetrical photograph with a strong impression of perspective: not only is the portal itself framed by identically-bricked archways on either side, also the view through the open portal reveals a building in the distance. Above the central archway, the name of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar is written on a tile in golden letters, catching the eye at the entrance to the city. On top of the portal, there is an arch with an image of the famous story of Rostam and the Akhvan-e Div, a demon with an elephant-like head and ugly body. The depicted motif portrays how the hero Rostam

Among the records of urban landscapes, images of the political lives of those towns and cities come to the fore. Many photographs of government buildings, such as customs offices or military barracks, as well as foreign representational offices, are part of the repertoire of the photograph album. During the photographic expedition of 1889–1890, the city of Astarabad and its governmental institutions were of special interest. For example, there is a set of photographs with a view of the royal grain store in Astarabad, which was renovated and enlarged in perimeter towards the end of the 1880s when Navvab Amir Khan-e Sardar was governor. These motifs were chosen in an attempt to illustrate the transparent and visible conditions of the local administration and social life.

Specific to Album 298, the spatial and socio-political mapping was extended to include photographs of caravansaries and postal stations, called *chapar khaneh*. The postal system (*chapar* ride) on the Tehran-Mashhad Route with its 25 postal stations, which were frequently built near caravanserais, was under the superintendence of the Minister of Posts. During that time, this traditionally well-functioning postal system suffered from maladministration.⁵⁰ Curzon pointed out how Amin al-Soltan engaged himself with postal affairs.⁵¹ In this context, picturing caravanserais and postal stations as part of a visual mapping of the Iranian domains served to create an administrative memory that furthered political ends.

The photographs that depict remote locations of strategic importance, in particular, underline the political dimensions constructed within the bounds of such an album, thereby transmitting a defined geographic imagination of an Iranian domain. The caption complementing such a photograph (fig. 9) describes in detail the exact coordinates of the residence of a high-ranking military general:

“The panorama of the residence of Lotf-‘Ali Khan-e Sartip [in] Chahar Dange [in] Hezar Jarib.⁵² And the village Yansar, which is one of the villages belonging to Bala Rastaq [upper Rastaq] and located at the edge of the mountains opposite of Kord Mahalleh in Astarabad. [The village] is 10 farsang [60 km] away from Astarabad.”

The residence of this army general, with its white facade in the midst of an idyllic landscape, entices the gaze of a viewer from a far distance. Yet this composition directs the beholder’s attention from the central, main building to the horizon. The photograph deceptively conveys a picturesque, idyllic, peaceful landscape, though the area was unanimously dynamic and unstable.

At first glance the photographs assembled in Album 298 seem to be a potpourri of motifs that are fairly disconnected: villages, fortresses, towns, caravanserais, postal offices, military camps, and residences in the periphery. However, assembling these diverse photographs into one album contextualizes them in a way that allows spatial



— 9: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Panorama of a General's Residence in Chahar Dange, 1307/1890, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

and socio-political imagination to be applied to the investigated domains. The single photograph obtains its specific and autonomous meaning, while simultaneously contributing to the developing formation of a visual map. James Corner argues that mapping pertains to more than just the physical attributes of terrain but includes also:

“[The] various hidden forces that underlie the workings of a given place. These include natural processes, such as wind and sun; historical events and local stories; economic and legislative conditions; even political interests, regulatory mechanisms and programmatic structures.”⁵³

He further pointedly observes that “the map *always* precedes the territory, in that space only becomes territory through acts of bounding and making visible, which are

primary functions of mapping.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, through Album 298 a visual map was constructed that allowed for a comprehensive “geographical imagination” of the regions Astarabad, ‘Aq Qal’eh, and Gorgan. By creating such visual maps in photographic albums “power-knowledge”⁵⁵ was generated through survey and inventory, making the domains visible and binding territories to the central power.

A VISION OF MODERNITY

The prevalent choice of telegraphic institutions as a motif in Qajar photography is in line with the political agenda of promoting the process of modernization, as I will argue. The caption for a photograph in Album 298 explains a picture of the Royal Office of Telegraphy in Semnan, together with its director Hajji Baba Khan and his group of officers (fig. 10). Taken on the rooftop of the telegraph office in Semnan, the building itself cannot be identified solely from the photograph. Yet the director of the telegraph office posing among his staff demonstrates the self-consciousness that identifies him as holder of this office. ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar depicted this motif from some distance, thus providing insight into the city with its citadel and mosque. This is but one of a variety of photographs contained in Album 298 that exhibits local telegraph offices, most along with their head officials and employees. The systematic way in which ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar took photographs of telegraphy offices on his route evidently demonstrates the central authorities’ special interest in telegraphy, and in particular that of Naser al-Din Shah.

The new technology of telegraphy was presented to Naser al-Din Shah as early as 1858 when Mirza Malkom Khan (1833/34–1908), a leading reformist of the time, connected two rooms of Dar al-Fonun by a telegraphic line.⁵⁶ Just three years later, in 1861, the first experimental telegraphic line was constructed and put into operation by Austrian engineers and teachers at the Dar al-Fonun.⁵⁷ This line covered a distance of 30 miles from Tehran to Karaj. By the end of the 1860s, telegraph lines were systematically extended through significant investments of the Iranian government and operated by the Indo-European Telegraph Company.

Abbas Amanat has aptly pointed out that no other technological innovation in modern times had the same impact on the political life of Iran as telegraphy.⁵⁸ In the decades following the expansion of telegraphy, it became increasingly apparent how such new methods of communication proved to be an immense asset in enforcing the power of the king. A significant element of Naser al-Din Shah’s political agenda consisted in his continuous endeavor to prevent the emergence of autonomous, independent sovereignties, together with the associated political turmoil. To this end, he observed from a distance the political actions, personal lives, sources of income, and military capabilities of his sons, half-brothers, and uncles, who held important political

positions such as local governor. The implementation of such modern communication systems revolutionized the methods of command and surveillance in the Iranian provinces, decisively supporting Naser al-Din Shah in controlling princely governors and members of the royal family. Naser al-Din Shah made use of the potential embodied in telegraphy as a direct and fast connection, not only to the Iranian provinces but later also to the capitals of neighboring and European countries. Through these means he was able to enter into a fast and open dialogue with higher representatives of other nations independent of any intermediaries and thus strengthen his position on the international political scene.⁵⁹

The route that 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar took in the context of his photographic expedition in 1889–1890 runs alongside the Tehran-Mashhad telegraph line. At the time of his travels, this telegraph line was operated by native Iranian telegraphic systems



— 10: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, The Royal Office of Telegraphy in Semnan, 1306/1889, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

and simultaneously rented out to the Indo-European Telegraph Department. For much of its existence, this department was autonomous. Between February 1888 and April 1893, however, the Indo-European Telegraph Department was under the direct auspices of the Director General of Indian Telegraphs.⁶⁰ The central government's eminent interest in the telegraphy system can be deduced from the significant number of photographs in Album 298 that are devoted to telegraphy institutions, including the telegraph offices in Ayvan-e Key, Qeshlaq, Deh-e Namak, Lasjard, Semnan, Ahovan, Qusheh, Damghan, Deh-e Molla, and Shahrud.

'Abdollah Mirza Qajar's photograph albums, compiled between 1883 and 1896 on the orders of the king and the central authorities, comprise many photographs related to the ongoing modernization of Iran. They included not only the photographs of telegraph offices but also photographs of factories, newly constructed bridges, hospitals, and modern educational institutions.⁶¹ Such visual representations characterize the ideological implications of a modern landscape and project the idea and ideology of modernity into its photographic construction.

MAKING DOMAINS VISIBLE

In the course of the 1889–1890 photographic expedition, 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar investigated the northern border region around Astarabad, 'Aq Qal'eh, and Katul for several months. This region had been of geopolitical importance to the colonial powers for many decades. As Curzon pointed out, in the first half of the nineteenth century the province of Astarabad was considered indispensable to reach India by land. If a line is drawn from Baku to India, it passes through the province. This was the preferred avenue of advance that had been contemplated by both Russia and France when they jointly planned an overland expedition against British holdings in India in 1800.⁶²

Even after Russia had gained control over the Transcaspian territories, affording an alternative land route to India other than through the Caspian region, the province Astarabad remained strategically significant. The Astarabad-Shahrud route was a kind of gateway to central Iran: once it was passed, troops could march unhampered from Shahrud either westward toward Tehran or eastward toward Mashhad.⁶³ For this reason, the province Astarabad, including the fertile soil between the Gorgan and Atrak rivers, was of strategic importance for the Qajar government. Moreover, the eye of the central authorities turned to this region due to the rebellion of the nomad Yamut tribe in 1888–1889, which the Iranian army could only subdue with tremendous effort.

Album 298 contains a considerable number of photographs—more than 50—taken on the frontier, an area that was inhabited only by nomads but was also enclosed between two important permanent military strongpoints in 'Aq Qal'eh and



— 11: 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, A Troop of Cossack Officers in Katul, 1307/1890, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

Katul. The military force based in the province Astarabad consisted of infantry regiments of the Iranian army and nomad cavalry, composed mainly of mercenaries who could be mobilized if required.⁶⁴ 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar traversed this border area, extensively documenting the military camps, garrisons of the Iranian army, official military meetings, nomad cavalry groups, and nomad villages.

A photograph in Album 298 displays the military representatives of a garrison in a remote observation camp near Katul (fig. 11). For this photograph, the troops of 'Ali Khan Sartip are staged in three rows.⁶⁵ The general himself, along with another military representative, is mentioned in the caption by name. Another example from this set of photographs displays the leading members of the Chahar Dangeh⁶⁶ division in front of a military camp near Astarabad (fig. 12). Their general, Najaf Khan Sartip, prominently positioned in the center, is framed by two subordinate officers, both mentioned by name, who sit cross-legged on the ground. Other members of the division



— 12: ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar, Military Representatives of Chahar Dange’s Regiment, 1307/1890, albumen print, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive, Tehran.

stand in a row behind them, framed by the camp with its tents and some type of observation pergola that smoothly transitions into the woods and mountains in the background.

‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar explored an unsettled but strategically significant area to record and compile a visual memory. It is obvious that the military representatives and nomad leaders were carefully arranged for the photographs. The power-exerting gaze of the camera, for which these military and nomadic groups were staged, replaced the supervising eye of the authority in unstable Iranian domains. Photography created exhaustive knowledge of the military forces and simultaneously observed and monitored them. Making the conditions of the unstable border regions visible extends the scope and realm of observation, creates “power-knowledge” through survey and inventory, and exercises power over the observed world.

CLOSING REMARKS

For more than a decade up to end of his reign, Naser al-Din Shah repeatedly ordered photographic expeditions to the northern and northeastern Iranian provinces. As part of this effort, the photographer 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar was frequently commissioned by the royal authority and the central administration between 1883 and 1896 to undertake photographic expeditions to unsettled, yet strategically important regions. When 'Abdollah Mirza was entrusted with the first such photographic documentation, these undertakings were far from being a novelty. It was only a matter of time after Naser al-Din Shah had ascended the throne for photographic campaigns to be conducted and photographic reports compiled. However, 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar's photographic documentation of the lands and people differed from that of foreigners in Iran by adding two novel dimensions to the function and meaning of photography: the first novelty is the systematic way in which comprehensive knowledge about the geographical space was gathered, serving to synthesize an administrative memory. The second one is the fact that photographic documentation stands in line with the political agenda of that time. This manifests itself in its function as a "world-enriching agent"⁶⁷ to the authorities, which, in extending the scope and realm of observation, serves to exercise power over the observed world.

The twofold objective of such photographic expeditions to the specified Iranian domains was demonstrated based on the case study of Album 298, preserved in the photographic archives of Golestan Palace. The narrative that runs through Album 298 is not opened with official photographs, i.e., images of the king, significant personalities, or relevant political events; rather, the album immediately begins with photographs of villages and locations along the route of the expedition. This is the way in which the socio-spatial mapping proceeded to promote a "geographical imagination." Although drawn from measured observations in the world, such mappings are not neutral or passive spatial representations, as James Corner⁶⁸ has pointedly observed. Mapping constituted a means of accumulating "power-knowledge," extending the spectrum of observable geographical and social space. The purpose of the photographic documentation of land and people in Qajar Iran therefore lay in the creation of comprehensive knowledge of local conditions and the assertion of power by the central authority: an attempt to control politically unsettled areas.

NOTES

Acknowledgement: This article is based on my research stay at the photographic archives of Golestan Palace in Tehran in 2010, made possible by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). I express my sincere thanks to Dr. Mohammad Hasan Semsar for his advice during this time and especially for calling my attention to ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar. In spite of being a significant Iranian photographer, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar and his works have still hardly been investigated. I am thankful to Fatemeh Sararyian for assisting me in the selection of several photographs, to the board of directors and the staff of Golestan Palace and the photographic archive, especially to Helen Asadiyan and Akram Babaei for the support and valuable information about the photographic albums of ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar.

- 1 The precise number of photograph albums, individual photographs, and glass negatives in the photographic archives of Golestan Palace varies among the sources; however, it is estimated at more than 43,000 photographs, mostly compiled in photograph albums. The Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO) published an executive summary in 2012 as part of the nomination of Golestan Palace for the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in Tehran. According to this report, the *Albumkhaneh* houses 1,040 photograph albums and 4,000 single photographs, which were partly prepared to fit into photograph containers, known as ‘*aksdan*. These were sometimes used instead of albums during the Qajar period.
- 2 The notion of “geographical imagination” is discussed extensively by Schwartz/Ryan, *Picturing Place*, 1–9.
- 3 For example, see Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 13–18, 259–315; Curzon, *Persia*, I, 182–221; Curzon, *Persia*, II, 585–634. For an extended survey on the political history of Iran during the Qajar period, see for example, Kazemzadeh in Avery/Hambly/Melville (eds.), *From Nadir Shah To the Islamic Republic*, 314–349.
- 4 Schwartz/Ryan, *Picturing Place*, 2.
- 5 Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 355, 438–439; Calmard, “Amin ol-Soltan.”
- 6 See ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar’s own statement published by Afshar 1983, 269.
- 7 Tahmasbpour, “Photography in Iran,” 9. I am grateful to Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour who provided me with the source for this dating. The day of ‘Abdollah Qajar’s death is reported in the memoirs of ‘Aziz al-Soltan Malijak II. See Aziz al-Soltan, *Ruznameh*, 2422.
- 8 Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, 98.
- 9 In 1896/97, ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar authored and published an extensive report on his stay abroad, which has been frequently reproduced in publications on Qajar photography. For example, see Afshar 1983, 268–269; Afshar, *Ganjineh*, 8–9 (Persian), 42–44 (English); Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, 98–101.
- 10 Staatsgewerbeschule 1926, 26.
- 11 The school program, published by the Imperial Royal State Vocational School in 1880, provides comprehensive insight into the syllabus of this institution, including that of the Department for Photography and Reproduction Techniques. For further information, see K.K. Staatsgewerbeschule in Salzburg 1880, 3–8, 10–12, front page, appendix.
- 12 Quoted verbatim in a letter from Dr. Hubert Schopf, dated June 22, 2012: “Abdollah M. aus Teheran, Reprod.-Schüler.” I am grateful to Dr. Hubert Schopf of the Province Archive (Landesarchiv) Salzburg for this information and for summarizing his careful inspection of the archive in a letter to me. He also noted that there are no photographs from ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar’s study time preserved in the Province Archive (Landesarchiv) Salzburg.

- 13 "Abdollah Mirza, Prinz von Persien, richtet soeben in Teheran die graphischen Künste ein zur Fabrikation von Staatspapieren. Die gesamte Einrichtung hierzu wird von Oesterreich bezogen. Werth der ersten Anschaffung 20.000 Francs." See Schuster, "Ausbildungsstätte," 72.
- 14 For example, see Afshar, "Some Remarks," 269.
- 15 According to its reference page, Album 296 was compiled by 'Abdollah Qajar. This album also includes a number of photographs taken by Mirza Hosayn-'Ali. Some of the photographs taken by 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar in Khorasan in 1883 are listed by Semsar, *Fehrest*, 66, 85, 90.
- 16 For a general overview on the photographic expeditions undertaken by 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar, see Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 81–86; Zoka' 1997, 102–104. Some reference pages of photograph albums compiled by 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar are published by Semsar, *Fehrest*, 427–428.
- 17 This page of Album 240 is published by Tahmasbpour *Shah-e 'akkas*, 84.
- 18 The majority of photographs in Album 291 are listed in the index of selected photographs in the photographic archives of the Golestan Place. See Semsar, *Fehrest*, 21–118.
- 19 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 104.
- 20 Atabai, *Fehrest*, 13.
- 21 For a brief account of these two photographers, see Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 128–129, 144. Although Zoka' published a number of photographs made by the latter, there is no indication of the number of the corresponding album. There is also no mention of this album in Atabai, *Fehrest*.
- 22 See, for example, Afshar, "Some remarks," 263; Adle/Zoka', "Notes et documents," 255–256; Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 5–6, 41–47.
- 23 For further information about these expeditions to Egypt and Palestine, see Hannavy, *Encyclopedia*, 475–478, 605–606, 619–622, 1239–1240, 1382–1384.
- 24 The photographic expeditions of Italian photographers in Iran from the 1850s onward are elaborately discussed by Bonetti/Prandi, *Persia Qajar*, 17–31. For an extensive exploration of this topic, see also Bonetti/Prandi, "Italian Photographers." The photograph album of the Italian diplomatic mission to Iran in 1862 is discussed in detail in Piemontese, "Photograph Album," 3–4, 249–271.
- 25 See, for example, Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 69–73; Adle, "Khorheh," 38–39; Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 47–55, 58–59.
- 26 See Adle, "Khorheh," 38–39.
- 27 Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 72.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 I use the term "Guarded Domains" in a twofold way. On the one hand, I borrow the term in the sense elaborated by Abbas Amanat: Iran had been defined since Safavid times as *mamalek-e mahruseh-yeh Iran* (the guarded domains). It represented a sense of "territorial and political homogeneity in a country in which the Persian language, culture, kingship, and Shi'ite religious creed became inseparable parts of the evolving national identity"; see Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 15. On the other hand, the notion of "Guarded Domains" underlines the objective of such photographic expeditions in their surveillance of the lands.
- 30 Ataba'i, *Fehrest*, 100.
- 31 In the early Qajar period Tehran was honored by the title of Dar al-Khelafeh, literally "residence of the caliph," as it was the residence of the Qajar rulers. This title renders the city as some kind of re-established Abbasid Baghdad, an effect of old political rhetoric, as Bert Fragner pointedly states. See Fragner, "Ilkhanid Rule," 68–82.
- 32 George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925) visited Iran in 1889–1890. He traveled from Mashhad to Tehran and extensively describes the route which 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar took on his expedi-

- tion in 1889/1890. For extensive information about the Tehran Mashhad road and its condition, see Curzon, *Persia*, I, 245–299.
- 33 Ibid., 190–191.
- 34 Navai/Malekzadeh, *Ruznameh*, 33. In general Naser al-Din Shah's memoirs do not go into detail about political events. Yet the daily routine recorded in his memoirs between September 1888 and April 1889 provides important clues regarding contemporaneous political proceedings.
- 35 For a historical overview, as well as the current state of political tension in the northern and north-eastern provinces, see Curzon, *Persia*, I, 182–189, 373–387; II, 585–634.
- 36 Schwartz/Ryan, *Picturing Place*, 1–11.
- 37 Ibid., 1.
- 38 For a discussion of early critical writing on the role of photography in the production of social knowledge, see Marien, *Photography and Its Critics*, 1–45.
- 39 Schwartz/Ryan, *Picturing Place*, 4.
- 40 Rose, "Geography," 4.
- 41 Schwartz/Ryan, *Picturing Place*, 8.
- 42 Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, 155.
- 43 Dehkhoda, *Loghatnameh*, 15516.
- 44 Curzon, *Persia*, I, 293.
- 45 The caption of photograph 72 in Album 291 provides further evidence regarding the pains that 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar took to access verified and detailed information. To gain exact information on the turquoise mines, working conditions, and technologies applied, as well as the difficulties involved in extracting minerals, 'Abdollah Mirza undertook an expedition into the mine. He hired 20 mineworkers and surprised them with his persistence to go deeper into the shaft, even when the air was getting extremely thick in order to, as he puts it himself, "completely explore the mine to provide a correct report to the king."
- 46 Harley, "Deconstructing," 12.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Scarce, "Qajar Tile Work," 75.
- 49 For a critical discussion on the visual representation of the Middle East in the nineteenth century, see for example Behdad, *Orientalist Photograph*, 11–32.
- 50 Curzon provided a detailed description of the postal system on the Tehran-Mashhad Route. Curzon, *Persia*, I, 247–256.
- 51 Curzon, *Persia*, II, 5.
- 52 This community, which consists of 54 villages including the village Yaneh Sar, is described by Razmara, *Farhang*, 325.
- 53 Corner, "Agency," 214.
- 54 Ibid., 222.
- 55 Introduced by Michel Foucault, see his *Power/Knowledge*, 78–92. Foucault's idea of power-knowledge is discussed within the context of "maps and the exercise of power" by Harley, "Deconstructing," 12.
- 56 Shahvar, "First Telegraph Line."
- 57 Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 404.
- 58 Ibid., 404–405.
- 59 Ibid., 429.
- 60 For further information on the Indo-European Telegraph Department, which is not identical to the Indo-European Telegraph Company, see Rubin, "Indo-European Telegraph Department."

- 61 Such photographs reveal a similarity to the motifs depicted in photographs from the collection of Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909). See, for example, Waley, “Images,” 112–127; Waley, “Albums,” 31–32; and Atasoy, “Sultan Abdülhamid II’s Photo-Collections,” iii–xi.
- 62 Curzon, *Persia*, I, 188–189.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 For information on the irregular cavalry, see Curzon, *Persia*, I, 589–591.
- 65 For an elaborate discussion on staged images in Qajar photography being “read” from right to left, like the direction of writing in the Persian language, see Pérez González, “Defining,” 10, 17–22; and Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*.
- 66 Chahar Dange is an area in the province Astarabad flanked by mountains to the south and west. Parts of this area are woodlands and barely accessible. See Razmara, *Farhang*, 93.
- 67 Corner, “Agency,” 213.
- 68 Ibid., 250.

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- 1: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, introductory page.
- 2: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 165.
- 3: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 17.
- 4: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 55.
- 5: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 100.
- 6: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 3.
- 7: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 9.
- 8: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 22.
- 9: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 136.
- 10: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 16.
- 11: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 107.
- 12: Golestan Palace/Photo Archive, Tehran, Photograph album 298, p. 112.

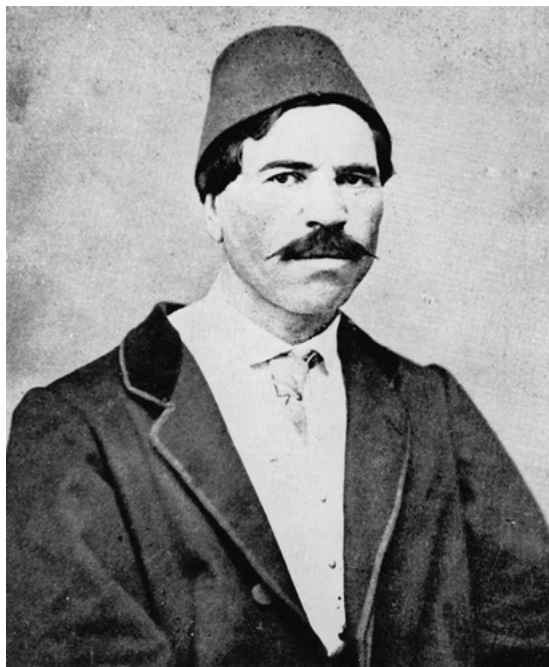
EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY SITES OF ISLAM IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Until 1925, no more than about 15 Europeans had been able to collect impressions of the holy sites of Islam in the Hijaz region of the Arabia Peninsula. These sites in the cities of Mecca and Medina, and their neighboring cities of Jeddah and Ta'if, are all located in present-day Saudi Arabia, but during the nineteenth century, the Hijaz was part of the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923).¹ In this essay, the relations between Europeans and pioneer Arab photographers, such as Muhammad Sadiq Bey (1832–1902) and al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar (active in 1880s), will be compared and assessed. These two photographers had direct contact with Europeans, through which they developed their own points of view and approaches to photography. In discussing them, the Dutch scholar of Arabian studies, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) will also be considered as a mediator of these exchanges.

Then as today, for non-Muslims visiting Islamic holy places was precarious and not allowed. Any non-Muslim caught doing so could have even lost his or her life. Heinrich von Maltzan (1826–1874), who travelled to Mecca in 1865 under an assumed identity and in local disguise, described the danger as follows:

“[I]f it had become known that he [a Muslim] had provided a European with the ways and means of reaching Mecca, which were so inaccessible for a non-Muslim, [b]ecause in regard to the journey to Mecca, the Turkish [Ottoman] government, which has set the death penalty for unbelievers who might sneak into the holy city, is not its [Mecca's] most fanatical guardian.... [E]very single Muslim, according to the degree of his fanaticism, considers it his duty to watch over with the greatest severity the Haram [holy enclosure] as far as this opportunity presents itself.”²

For those Europeans who later made it to these sites, it was not possible to work with photographic instruments and equipment openly without arousing the suspicion of the local population, due to the strict checks imposed on foreigners and mistrust of them, as Mustafa Amer (1896–1973), professor at the Egyptian University for Geography

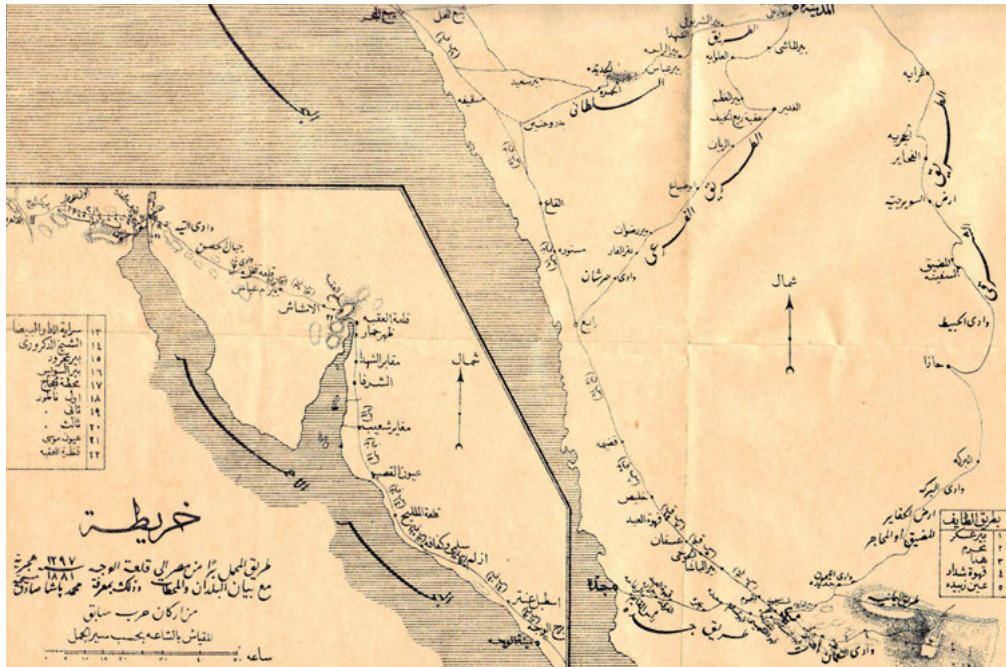


— 1: Muhammad Sadiq Bey (1832–1902).

in Cairo, commented in his account of the pioneering photographic achievements of the Egyptian colonel Muhammad Sadiq Bey.³ The Colonel himself remarked in his travel notes in 1880: “[A] visitor of non-Muslim beliefs would have been strangled immediately unless he were very well dressed and protected by a respected Muslim.”⁴ It was much easier, then, for local people to be seen working with photographic equipment rather than foreigners.

1 MUHAMMAD SADIQ BEY

Muhammad Sadiq Bey was the first photographer to take pictures of Medina (1861) and then of Mecca and Medina (1880–1881) (fig. 1). His work enjoys a unique position within the history of photography, not only due to the obstacles outlined above but also because of the extreme climatic conditions under which he had to work: temperatures were frequently in excess of 40° C during the daytime but dropped to as low as 4° C at night. The Arabic name and Ottoman title of Muhammad Sadiq Bey⁵ have come down to us in various transliterations, i.e., Sadiq, Sadic, Sadik, and Sadek. In



— 2: Cartographic itinerary in the Hijaz, drawn up by Muhammad Sadiq Bey in c. 1861.

Arabia and Asia at that time it was usual for commercial reasons either not to mention the name of the photographer or to replace it with the name of the studio or photographer involved in marketing the image. This practice explains the evident manipulation of names on certain prints attributed to Muhammad Sadiq Bey. During this period, photography was generally regarded not as an artistic but rather a technical medium, and the copyright regulations in force today did not apply. Some photographs from this time did, nonetheless, bear the note that “reproduction of this photograph in any form is forbidden.”⁶

Muhammad Sadiq Bey came from Cairo. After completing his schooling, he attended the Military College in Cairo, *Madrassa al-khangah al-harbiyyah*. In 1844, he served as the military attaché in an Egyptian delegation to France. Muhammad Sadiq Bey subsequently completed his training as an engineer⁷ at the *École polytechnique* in Paris and later taught cartographic drawing at the Military College in the Cairo Citadel. He eventually attained the rank of colonel in the Ottoman army and then in the Egyptian army after the establishment of the Khedivate of Egypt in 1867.

In his capacity as engineer and cartographer, Muhammad Sadiq Bey was involved for decades in surveying the region of the Hijaz and was thus thoroughly acquainted

with the sites, lands, and landscapes held sacred by Muslims (fig. 2). He was later elected president of the *Société khédiviale de géographie du Caire*. By the time he ended his military career, he had attained the rank of *liwa* (lieutenant-general) and was eventually given the title of *pasha*.⁸

Muhammad Sadiq Bey published four books devoted to the region of the Hijaz, to the *mahmal*, the ceremonial litter borne by a camel,⁹ and to Islamic pilgrimage. They are, in English translation: *A short report about investigations of the Hijaz route from Wajh and Yambo El-Bahr to Medina* (1877),¹⁰ *Torch of the adorned camel litter* (1881),¹¹ *Star of a pilgrimage for the mahmal journey by sea and by land* (1884),¹² and *Pilgrim's guide for visitors* (1896).¹³ The last book contains woodcuts by an Italian engraver, Francesco Canedi (1841–1910), as well as photomechanical reproductions made by a company in Geneva and signed “Sadag Sc., Genève.” The woodcuts by Canedi are probably reproductions of the first photographs taken by Muhammad Sadiq Bey in Medina in 1861.

Muhammad Sadiq Bey provides important insights into himself as a photographer in his second publication *Torch of the adorned camel litter*. This is the most abundant source of information concerning his approach to photographic visualization, which will be considered more closely below. His interest in photographic procedures was most likely awakened during his stay in Paris, although it is possible that some debt is owed to the presence of Armenian photographers who had studios in Cairo during the second half of the nineteenth century. Whatever the origin, the sheer quality of his photographs is evidence of his talent in this field and reveals professional standards in his handling of the wet collodion procedure.

In 1880, Muhammad Sadiq Bey published a synopsis of his trip to Medina in French in the *Bulletin de la Société khédiviale de géographie* under the title “Médine, il y a vingt ans.”¹⁴ Compared to the Arabic edition, this article lacked many important details, such as geographical information, description of the instruments used, a route map, or ground plan of the Haram. These omissions may well have been the reason why the pioneering scientific and photographic achievements of Muhammad Sadiq Bey at that time failed to attract the attention that they deserved. The early photographs of Medina taken around 1861 during his first expedition were, however, shown in the Egyptian pavilion at the first world's fair held in the United States in 1876, the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. This accomplishment was remarkable for several reasons: in this international presentation of art, photography was shown for the very first time on an equal footing with painting. Furthermore, it was in Philadelphia that the concept of the world's fair was developed in conjunction with the exhibits from individual countries. At this time, Muhammad Sadiq Bey became one of the most important representatives of his country.

He has also been the subject of two publications. Attention was drawn to his achievements in research and photography already in 1932 by M. A. Mustafa Amer in his article, “An Egyptian Explorer in Arabia in the Nineteenth Century,” which

appeared in the *Bulletin de la Société royale de géographie d'Égypte*.¹⁵ However, it was only toward the end of the twentieth century that Muhammad Sadiq Bey became a subject of investigation once again, this time in Muhammad Hammam Fikri's *Al-Rihlat al-Hijaziyyah* (The journey of the Hijaz).¹⁶ This publication is certainly connected with an increasing awareness in the Arab world of indigenous views of their own history and culture. It is undeniable that this book is also a tribute to Muhammad Sadiq Bey's pioneering work. Moreover, these works have made it possible to draw together the facts concerning Muhammad Sadiq Bey's life and the work presented in the present volume.

MUHAMMAD SADIQ BEY'S NOTES CONCERNING HIS FIRST EXPEDITION TO MEDINA MADE BETWEEN JANUARY 23 AND FEBRUARY 28, 1861

On January 21, 1861, Muhammad Sadiq Bey was commissioned by the Sublime Porte, primarily for military purposes, to survey and to investigate the geography of the region between the Red Sea, the port of al-Wajh, and Medina. It was to be the first survey of this area. On Thursday, January 23, 1861, he left Cairo by train on his way to the Gulf of Suez, a trip that took four days. He then sailed for two days to al-Wajh,¹⁷ a medium-sized port located south of Aqaba on the coast of the Red Sea. This route was an itinerary much-favored by Egyptian pilgrims.¹⁸ Muhammad Sadiq Bey was traveling with a small group, probably comprising colleagues, and they covered the approximately 261 miles to Medina in 12 days.

The photographer used a precise documentary style to describe his trip and the main sights along the way, including ports, the coast, and the surrounding regions. About six miles from the coast, Muhammad Sadiq Bey found a fortress, which he described in the following terms:

"[The fortress] is built amid mountains of red sandstone. It is well equipped with weapons and [...] is suitable [...] as a supply store of provisions for pilgrims arriving from Egypt at the port of al-Wajh. The square is strewn with pebbles and stones, and this is the junction where three roads meet: the first leads to the Gulf of Suez and is known as the El-Ala route, the second is called El-Sitar, and the third leads to the holy city of Medina."¹⁹

Muhammad Sadiq Bey devoted careful attention to the natural surroundings, the lands around the fortress, the water supply points for the area, and the relations between the governor and the Arab population. He drew comparisons between the camels of this region and those found in Egypt and Syria. After staying in the fortress

for two days, Muhammad Sadiq Bey continued his journey southward toward Medina and Wadi Al-Hamd. Wherever he made a survey of the land, he described the roads and paths, the appearances of mountains, the flora, and the distances between the individual stopping-points and camps. With his group, he covered an average of 23 to 32 miles per day, and it took him 12 days to reach Medina.²⁰

Muhammad Sadiq Bey provided a detailed account of Medina and the *Menaqa*, the square where pilgrims gather in front of the gates of the city. He also reported at length about the rites and ceremonies performed during the pilgrimage, the hajj, as well as about the citizens of Medina. According to him, they had dark brown skin, looked rather feeble, and were usually willing to offer their services as guides for pilgrims. He described trading with merchants, who principally sold dates, remarked on the exaggerated prices for board and lodging during the time when pilgrims were in the city, and elaborated on the stalls in the bazaars and on the streets, which were about 16 feet wide.²¹

Muhammad Sadiq Bey was responsible for providing the first comprehensive account of the settlement and climatic conditions of this region. The equipment that he took with him included a compass, surveying instruments,²² and a bulky plate camera. Although his photography would assure Muhammad Sadiq Bey's posthumous fame, this was really more of a hobby for him while on his travels. Yet overtime he perfected his photographic work, becoming a professional photographer, and one could surmise that his high-quality photographs greatly complemented his work as a surveyor.

Having reached Medina, Muhammad Sadiq Bey made several panoramic photographs of the city on February 12, 1861, as well as pictures of the entrance courtyard enclosed by a wall, called the Haram, with the Prophet's Mosque (founded in 622, although no part of the earlier building has survived). He was well aware of the historic significance of his activities, as he noted in his travelogue:

"When the highly esteemed place became visible, I took up position at a point on the roof of the Arsenal, from which I had a view over the city such that I was permitted to photograph a part of the residential district as well. With regard to the view of the greatly revered dome [over the tomb of the Prophet], though, I also photographed it from the inside the Haram, using the aforementioned apparatus. I was the very first person to produce such pictures, using this apparatus."²³

In the French version, "*Médine, il y a vingt ans*," he writes:

"It was my good fortune that I had to draw up a precise ground plan of the mosque, as well as to take a photograph of its south façade, along with an all-encompassing view from the Tophané, the Arsenal located to the right of the [entrance] gateway Bab-el-Gami."²⁴

To date, no other photographs from this period depicting these subjects have come to light. All that has survived are engravings (to achieve better reproduction quality) based on Muhammad Sadiq Bey's photographs, which appeared in his publication in the *Bulletin de Société khédiviale de géographie du Caire*,²⁵ as well as in a later article on Muhammad Sadiq Bey in the same journal.²⁶

That none of the local inhabitants objected to his working with a camera may be explained by the fact that Muhammad Sadiq Bey was himself a Muslim and well acquainted with the religion, language, and customs of the people of the region.²⁷ Muhammad Sadiq Bey is also regarded as the first person to have investigated and described the northern section of the route from al-Wajh to Wadi Al-Hamd, 16 years before Richard Burton. Muhammad Sadiq Bey's writings were first published in 1877, while the Englishman was himself investigating and surveying the region. During this period, the area was under Egyptian control, and Burton's research was supported by the viceroy of Egypt, Ismail Pasha, and a group of Egyptian assistants. Burton's results appeared shortly afterward in 1879 in the two volume work *The Land of Midian Revisited*.

Muhammad Sadiq Bey's journal-style travel report was published in Arabic by the Egyptian War Ministry in 1877.²⁸ It contained detailed accounts of events that had occurred during his trip, along with a full description of Medina and the pilgrimage there. This book also included: four photographs showing views of interest; a map showing the itinerary covered; an illustration of his land surveying; and a ground plan of the Haram, the entrance courtyard with the Mosque of the Prophet. This last is considered to be not only the earliest but also a very accurate topographical representation of the site.²⁹ The same descriptions appeared in three successive installments of the first volume of a newspaper for the Egyptian military.³⁰

Thanks to his meticulous descriptions, it is possible to reconstruct the exact itinerary—part of which followed several pilgrim routes in the Hijaz—undertaken by Muhammad Sadiq Bey in 1861. The photographic yield of this trip reveals the care and patience that he devoted to such work. In his photographs, Muhammad Sadiq Bey was breaking new ground; before him, no researcher had ever reconnoitered the region or photographed Medina. The whole journey, which fell into two distinct sections, lasted from January 23 until February 28, 1861:

I. Muhammad Sadiq Bey's journey through the Hijaz:

From the Port of al-Wajh to Medina (417.8 km = 261.5 miles)

January 23	By train from Cairo to Suez in four days
January 27	Embarkation on the Gulf of Suez
January 29	Arrival at the port of al-Wajh
January 30	Fortress of al-Wajh, 9 km from the port

February 1	Wadi al-Miyah – Wadi Farsh al-Na‘m – Umm Harz, 38 km in 7 hours and 30 minutes
February 2	Wadi Abul-Ajaj – Wadi al-Ruwayda – Jabal al-Sili‘a – al-Khauthala, 40 km in 7 hours and 45 minutes
February 3	Matar, 36.5 km in 7 hours and 50 minutes
February 4	Wadi al-Uqla – al-Uqla Station, 33.2 km in 6 hours and 50 minutes
February 5	Ruins of Qasr al-Ahmadi – Amudan – al-Fuqayyir, 51 km in 11 hours and 30 minutes
February 6	Stay in al-Fuqayyir
February 7	al-Naqqarat – Wadi (no name given), 37.5 km (time not given)
February 8	al-Helw, 40.5 km in 8 hours and 50 minutes
February 9	Istabl Antar – al-Shagwa, 30.5 km in 6 hours and 20 minutes
February 10	al-Mellih, 35 km in 7 hours and 20 minutes
February 11	al-Dayni Station, 42.6 km in 8 hours and 40 minutes
February 12	Abar Osman – Jabal Uhud – al-Menaqha – Medina, 24.1 km in 5 hours

II. Muhammad Sadiq Bey’s Journey through the Hijaz:

From Medina to Yanbu al Bahr (237.125 km = 148.2 miles)

February 16	Abar ‘Ali, 10.125 km in 2 hours and 30 minutes
February 17	Bir al-Sharyufi (a cave?), 36.5 km in 7 hours and 55 minutes
February 18	al-Shuhada – Bir al-Raha – Bir ‘Abbas, 44 km in 9 hours and 20 minutes
February 19	Trip through al-Judayda – city of al-Judayda – al-Hamra’ fortress, 32 km in 6 hours and 55 minutes
February 20	Naqr al-Far – Bir Sa‘id – Wadi (no name given), 36 km in 8 hours and 55 minutes
February 21	Yanbu‘ al-Nakhl, 39 km in 8 hours and 20 minutes
February 22	Yanbu‘ al-Bahr, 39.5 km in 7 hours and 30 minutes
February 23	Sailed from Yanbu‘ al-Bahr
February 28	Arrival in the Gulf of Suez ³¹

PHOTOGRAPHS OF MECCA AND MEDINA TAKEN BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1880 AND JANUARY 1881

On a further expedition into the Hijaz that began in September 1880, Muhammad Sadiq Bey joined a group of Egyptian pilgrims that annually followed the overland route across the Sinai Peninsula in order to take the *mahmal* on its way to Mecca as far as the coast of the Red Sea. Every year, in a symbolic ritual, the palanquin of the *mahmal*

was sent by the Khedival government to Mecca at the time of the great pilgrimage, the hajj. It was filled with gifts and the precious veil, the *kiswah*, with which the Kaaba was newly covered each year. Thus, during this trip, Muhammad Sadiq Bey was a high-ranking official representative of the Khedivate and the person responsible for the *mahmal*'s safe passage. Muhammad Sadiq Bey was not the leader of this expedition, but he did have a very important rank. Other regions also sent their own *mahmals*, but the Egyptian processional shrine was the best known of all. This custom was eventually abolished in 1960.³²

Muhammad Sadiq Bey again took camera and photographic equipment on this trip. In Mecca, he photographed the sacred mosque, the crowd of pilgrims circling the Kaaba, the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad's parents, and the tents pitched by great numbers of pilgrims in Mina on the plain at the foot of Mount Arafat. In his published account of the 1880–1881 journey in *Torch of the adorned camel litter*, he recorded some thoughts relating to his work as a photographer:

“November 23, 1880

In these days, by means of photography, I succeeded in taking a picture of the Great Mosque in Mecca and of the Kaaba. I also took a picture of its inner courtyard, as far as this was possible, owing to the enormous crowd of people and constrictions of space.”³³

Further on, he noted:

“I succeeded in describing the inner courtyard of the Haram [in a written account], as well as by means of a photographic camera, taking a picture of its outward appearance and including all the buildings that surround it.”³⁴

Muhammad Sadiq Bey also took the opportunity to photograph the guardian of the Kaaba, Shaykh 'Umar al-Shaibi:

“By means of photography, I depicted the highly esteemed one and sent him [this photograph] with the following verses: ‘My heart captured your presence in the grace and luster of the Kaaba. My heart is burning [with pain] because of the separation, and yet photographers are not condemned to burn in fire [in hell]. You, I have drawn on paper in friendship and memory.’”³⁵

This thoughtful and critical reflection about his medium is highly relevant to the nature of photography as a means of documentation and reportage. On one hand, it is capable of depicting something of an intimate nature for private use as a remembrance of a person or event while on the other, exposing this intimacy to the eyes of strangers.

The following notes recorded by Muhammad Sadiq Bey reveal that he later set off for Medina where he made several panorama images of the city and photographed the Green Dome (1279) over the Tomb of the Prophet:

“December 10, 1880

[I]t was possible for me to draw an exact and detailed ground plan of the Haram. By means of photography, I also made a picture of the enlightened city [Medina] with the dome and the five minarets. And I photographed the view of the dome from inside the Haram.”³⁶



— 3: Muhammad Sadiq Bey, Medina, Sharif Shawqat Pasha, the Guardian of the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad, flanked by his two eunuch assistants, 1880.



— 4: Muhammad Sadiq Bey, Panorama of Medina (detail), 1861 or 1880, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim/Forum Internationale Photographie.

He was also able to take a picture of the guardian of the mosque, Sharif Shawkat Pasha, the Shaykh al-Haram, with two eunuch assistants (fig. 3). It was again with pride that Muhammad Sadiq Bey noted: “I also took a photograph of the Sheik al-Haram and some eunuchs at the venerable place. And I am the very first who has ever made such pictures by means of photography.”³⁷

In 1881, on the occasion of the *Third International Congress of Geographers* in Venice, Muhammad Sadiq Bey published his views of Mecca and Medina as a portfolio album. This album was published by the Société khédiviale géographie and distributed by its secretary-general, M. le Chevalier Bosola Bey. Each album of photographs cost 40 francs, while those in which the photographs had been pasted onto card cost 50 francs. At this congress in Venice, Muhammad Sadiq Bey was awarded a gold medal for his work, a distinction that heralded his international recognition as a photographer.

Muhammad Sadiq Bey was very meticulous about the way in which he presented his photographs, too. He wrote explanatory titles in Arabic, and each glass negative was signed with his name written in both Arabic and French as “Sadik Bey.” It may be

assumed that this group of images must have included photographs of Medina that he had already taken during his first trip in 1861, which he had newly prepared as albumen prints. At present, it is impossible to ascertain precisely which of these images of Medina were taken in 1861 and which during his second visit in 1880 (fig. 4). In his photographic portfolio, the following laudatory text was included:

“Collection de Vues Photographiques de ‘La Mecque et de Médine’ par M. Sadic Pacha, Colonel d’Etat-Major Egyptien. Auteur de deux ouvrages sur le pèlerinage. Photographie diplômée à l’exposition de Philadelphie 1876. Cette Collection, qui a obtenu la MÉDAILLE D’OR à l’Exposition Internationale de Géographie de Venise 1881.”

A portrait of the photographer taken at this time shows him with rather severe features and a moustache (fig. 1).

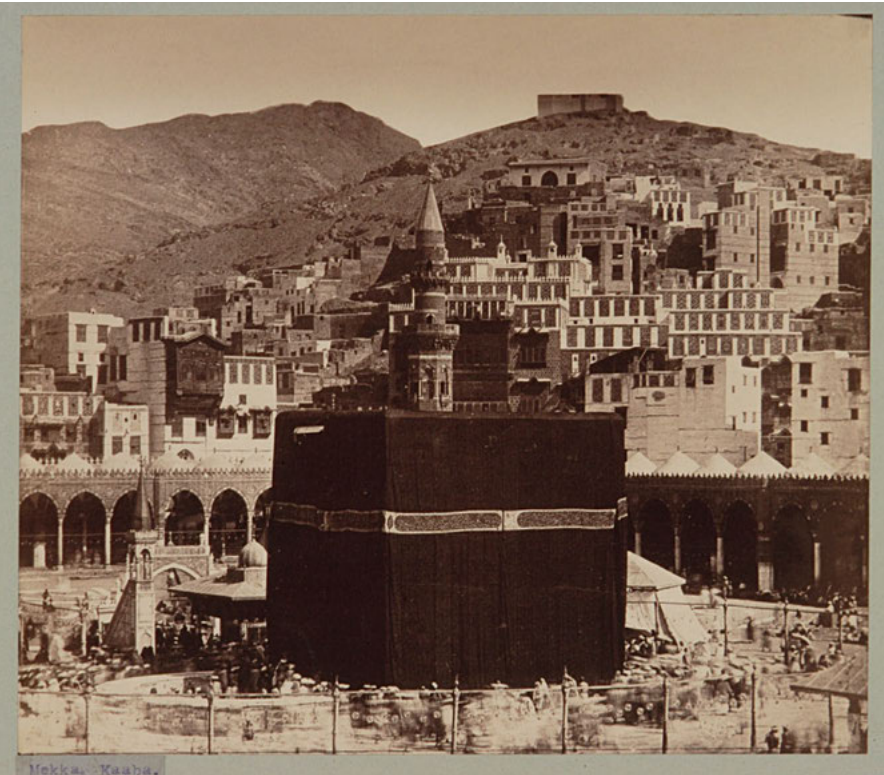
In 1884, Muhammad Sadiq Bey set off on another trip, this time again accompanying an Egyptian group of pilgrims in the role of treasurer. This was to be his last visit to the Hijaz. Shortly beforehand, his wife, to whom he appears to have been particularly close, had died in Mecca; they had traveled there together from Cairo. After Muhammad Sadiq Bey had personally made all the arrangements for her funeral, she was buried in Medina. After returning to Cairo, he published another book, containing illustrations and a chapter dealing with his painful loss, which was edged in black as a sign of mourning. The sum of his experiences was presented in his third book, *Star of a pilgrimage for the mahmal journey by sea and by land*.

After Muhammad Sadiq Bey had retired from the army and enjoyed purely titular offices, he published a fourth book about the hajj, *Pilgrim’s guide for visitors*, which again drew on the experiences of his three trips. This travel guide contained practical advice and information for pilgrims. A portrait of the author as photographer served as the frontispiece of this book. In this photograph, he is seen wearing a costly brocaded coat, such as was reserved for men of high rank. The book again made reference to the fact that the author was the first person to have documented Mecca and Medina in photographs, and who proudly pointed out, “I was awarded the gold medal, first class, in the Venice exhibition in 1881.”³⁸ This was a time, in which Muhammad Sadiq Bey’s fame and reputation were on the rise, and his social recognition extended to leading intellectual circles in Cairo. The title “pasha” had already been bestowed on him after the publication of his second book. In 1902, he was appointed governor of El Arish in Sinai, but after spending only two months there, he suffered heatstroke. He returned to Cairo where the 70-year-old died the same year.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUHAMMAD SADIQ BEY'S PHOTOGRAPHY

Muhammad Sadiq Bey's photographs are the earliest known images depicting a Muslim pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as the surrounding regions (figs. 4, 5, 6). There is much to suggest that he worked methodically: he did not merely "capture" images of his subjects but made careful preparations for each image, composing it to show the fundamental nature of its motif. Thanks to his training as a geometer and geodesist, Muhammad Sadiq Bey had highly developed spatial vision and was well-acquainted with the rules of good pictorial composition. His profession had also given him an excellent eye for the arrangement of points, lines, distances, and angles within three-dimensional spaces. However, in his photographs, he was also concerned with the precise presentation of interrelationships between objects and with localizing architecture in its visual contexts. He had mastered the techniques necessary to make maps and ground plans of places and buildings, with such work requiring a highly developed capacity for spatial-abstract thought in order to recognize the essential features of the object under consideration. As mentioned by Fikri,³⁹ one can find indications that Muhammad Sadiq Bey recorded events and experiences with exceptional "diqqat al-wasf" (precision of description). Fikri makes regular reference to Muhammad Sadiq Bey's carefulness, accuracy, and precision while reserving particular praise for his investigations concerning the pilgrimage to Mecca and its developments. For this reason, Fikri has spoken in favor of reprinting this travel account, which in his opinion has not received the attention it deserves. In his journals, Muhammad Sadiq Bey often spoke of "view," "appearance," and "form." A pronounced emphasis on visual perspective is evident throughout his writings and work. In a great many of his descriptions, he mentioned the spatial composition of objects, a tendency that is reflected with marked frequency in his texts.⁴⁰

Of Muhammad Sadiq Bey's photographs, three basic types of images may be distinguished: panoramas, landscape-format views, and portrait-format images. To convey spatial depth and breadth or to present a city or landscape as fully as possible, he took photographs from two or three vantage points and then created a panoramic image by combining them into one picture or by placing images side by side. Examples of this approach can be seen in some photographs of Mecca, Medina, and the camp near Mount Arafat. An impressive panorama image is the view of Medina, in which Muhammad Sadiq Bey waited until the moment when the pilgrims, who had pitched their tents in front of the city gate, turned toward Mecca to pray. With its clear delineation of fore-, mid- and backgrounds, the assemblage of two images depicting Mount Arafat, with its countless pilgrims, tents, and sacrificial animals, is rather like a wall-painting. In his landscape-format views, Muhammad Sadiq Bey adopted a broad perspective, boldly embracing the surroundings, for example in his images showing the pilgrims' camp near Mount Arafat, the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad's parents,



— 5: Muhammad Sadiq Bey, Mecca, view into the Temple Courtyard with the Mosque and the Kaaba, 1880. Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim/Forum Internationale Photographie. — 6: Muhammad Sadiq Bey, Mecca, Pilgrims within the Temple Courtyard, 1880, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim/Forum Internationale Photographie.

and the Kaaba. Owing to the long exposure, the many pilgrims walking around the Kaaba have become ghostly blurs and circular streaks of light that add a lively element to the image (fig. 6). In all these photographs, the conscious arrangement and ordering of spatial relationships are immediately evident.

Muhammad Sadiq Bey was an accomplished portrait photographer, too, as can be seen in his picture of the guardian of the mosque in Medina, Sharif Shawkat Pasha with his two eunuch assistants, using a portrait (vertical) format (fig. 3). In spite of the classically-symmetrical arrangement—the two standing eunuchs are seen in profile flanking the centrally-placed, seated pasha who is looking directly at the camera—Muhammad Sadiq Bey succeeded in creating an intimate atmosphere. The facial expression of the pasha does not appear forced; rather, he seems at his ease, regarding the camera lens with a faint and somewhat artful smile, which thereby establishes a direct relationship between the viewer and the person portrayed. A picture of this kind may not have been possible if the photographer had not enjoyed the full confidence of the high-ranking Muslim dignitary; thus, at this time, such pictures could not have been normally taken by European studio photographers. Muhammad Sadiq Bey was content to do without the painted-cloth background that was standard in studios of this period. The background comprises a latticework fence, and the photograph was taken in the open-air, using the available daylight. Muhammad Sadiq Bey took several pictures of the same subject, one of which shows the pasha surrounded by three seated eunuch assistants; nonetheless, the version described here in detail is clearer and more convincing in terms of its overall composition.

When first published in 1881, a portfolio containing 12 photographs by Muhammad Sadiq Bey could be purchased for just 50 French francs. In recent years, the market prices for early photographs from the Arabian Peninsula and from the Middle East in general have risen to dizzying heights. Thus, in 1998, the state of Saudi Arabia was willing to pay no less than £1.4 million (c. \$2.3 million or €2 million) for an album containing 18 albumen prints by Muhammad Sadiq Bey.⁴¹

2 THE PHOTOGRAPHIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AL-SAYYID ‘ABD AL-GHAFFAR AND CHRISTIAAN SNOUCK HURGRONJE⁴²

Before turning to al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, another local pioneer of photography, this section focuses on the man with whom he professionally collaborated, the Dutch Arabist and Islamicist Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. Coming in close contact through Hurgronje’s training of al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar in the art of photography, the photographic perceptions of Snouck Hurgronje were passed onto al-Sayyid ‘Abd

al-Ghaffar, who then later developed his own photographic vision. His photographs are evidence of their mutual respect of a fruitful cultural exchange and of a successful cultural symbiosis between the Middle East and Europe.

THE PICTORIAL ATLAS WITH PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1884–1885 AND HIS STAY IN JEDDAH

Snouck Hurgronje stayed in Jeddah from August 28, 1884, to February 21, 1885, where he was a guest of the Dutch consulate (fig. 7). Close examination of the backgrounds of many of his pictures revealed that the inner courtyard of this establishment served as his photographic studio. Using his camera, he was the first to take remarkable group portraits of pilgrims, and his work ensures him the status of a European pioneer in the photography of Arabia.⁴³

Back in Leiden in 1888, Snouck Hurgronje published *Mecca: The city and its rulers*, accompanied by a portfolio of photographs measuring 36.2 × 26.5 cm with the title *Pictorial atlas*. This portfolio contained 65 albumen prints pasted onto card, along with four engravings and four colored lithograph prints showing, among other things, objects from Mecca, most of which belonged to Snouck Hurgronje's own collection of ethnographic objects.⁴⁴ The images in the *Pictorial atlas* were numbered using Roman numerals, and most had been taken in or around 1884–1885. They include an engraving made from a photograph by Muhammad Sadiq Bey (No. I, *The mosque and the northwest part of the city*), as well as one of his photographs (No. III, *The Kaaba*). These were followed by photographs of groups of pilgrims from Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and India. When Snouck Hurgronje was living in Jeddah, the time of the hajj was just coming to an end. Many pilgrims were on their way home and required travel permits, which gave Snouck Hurgronje the perfect opportunity to photograph them in the courtyard of the Dutch consulate. In particular, pilgrims from Indonesia needed a visa issued by the consulate to serve as a travel permit; this is why a few of his photographs show pilgrims actually holding their permits (fig. 8). The administrative measure of demanding issuance of a travel permit was necessary for two reasons: first, to protect the pilgrims against worse forms of arbitrary mistreatment by guides in Mecca; and second, to keep the flood of pilgrims from the East Indies within manageable bounds.⁴⁵

Snouck Hurgronje photographed pilgrims wearing outfits considered by him typical of their native countries. That these pictures were taken in the inner courtyard of the Dutch consulate is demonstrated by a group photograph in which Snouck Hurgronje himself is to be seen, standing on the right and wearing a light-colored shirt and a fez. This photograph was taken in late 1884, using either a self-timing device or by another person releasing the shutter. It is worth noting that the background of



— 7: Albumen print of a photograph of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in a local dress, probably taken by his Meccan associate ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, the doctor, April–August 1885, Leiden University Libraries. — 8: Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (attr.), Pilgrims from Ambon, Kei and Banda, on the Left, the Son of a Man from Ambon and a Woman from Mecca, 1884/85.

this image occurs again in the portraits of pilgrims included in the *Pictorial atlas*, i.e., a boarded-up window, some scanty foliage, and pots containing palms and banana plants.

In the *Pictorial atlas*, no photographers are named except Muhammad Sadiq Bey and the field researcher and Orientalist Siegfried Langer (1857–1882). Picture No. XXV does record the name “Langer,” who met a tragic end during an expedition to Yemen.⁴⁶ In his preface though, Snouck Hurgronje mentioned that he had found a co-worker to whom he had instructed photography:

“With the exception of Nos. I and III [Muhammad Sadiq Bey’s photographs], all the pictures in the attached atlas have been reproduced from photographs taken by myself, by an Arab instructed in photography by myself, or else drawn from my collection of things from Mecca.”⁴⁷

The Arab to whom he had given instruction was al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, a doctor from Mecca who will be considered later below.

SNOUCK HURGRONJE'S STAY IN MECCA FROM FEBRUARY 21 TO JULY 5, 1885

In addition to the pictures of pilgrims taken in Jeddah, the *Pictorial Atlas* contained photographs taken in Mecca. These were portraits made in a room setup to serve as a provisional studio. A white cloth was often spread out as the background, while the floor was covered with carpets or a white cloth. For these portraits, the photographer incorporated simple props, such as a chair, armchair, or table. For the first time, these images provided photographic records of important dignitaries, who were often shown with their children, as well as members of various professions and trades living in Mecca, wearing typical clothing along with requisite attributes, such as a uniform, sash, medal, saber, or dagger.⁴⁸

It seems probable that Snouck Hurgronje had his photographic equipment sent on to Mecca. After all, this would have been advisable for reasons of safety, as such a cumbersome apparatus would have been difficult to transport as luggage without attracting attention, arousing suspicions that he was a spy or a non-Muslim, and avoiding accusations of having converted to Islam only for the purpose of taking photographs of Mecca. Durkje van der Wal has proposed that Snouck Hurgronje could have possibly used a sort of “revolver camera” to take pictures of the Kaaba.⁴⁹ Van der Wal hypothesizes that this type of camera was constructed with the “revolver method” of a rotating glass plate that enabled six photographs to be taken in succession without changing the plate.⁵⁰ Due to the very nature of the camera, taking photographs might have been dangerous for a European, and in my opinion, if anything was used, it would have most likely been a discreet vest camera. Having been exiled from Mecca in 1885, Snouck Hurgronje was also no longer able to photograph there due to the mounting suspicions mentioned above.

Right from the beginning of his stay, Snouck Hurgronje concentrated on portrait photographs to dispel suspicions about the procedure. Photography might have still been considered something new and unheard of in Mecca—despite Muhammad Sadiq Bey's photographs in Medina in 1861 and in Mecca in 1880–1881—and could thus arouse curiosity, if not suspicion. It is also conceivable that after a while, Snouck Hurgronje's improvised studio became a popular meeting place for various social groups. After important dignitaries had allowed themselves to be photographed, it is easy to imagine that representatives of the city's “high society” might have wanted to have portraits made of themselves with their families. The medium of photography enabled Snouck Hurgronje to broaden further his contacts and circle of friends, moving him closer to his aim of gaining insights into the society of Mecca.

What makes all these individual and group portraits so fascinating is the fact that they provide the first photographically-documented survey of various classes and social groups of nineteenth-century Mecca—a truly encyclopedic oeuvre as the

title *Pictorial atlas* may have implied. However, in the photographic portfolio only a tiny fraction of this vast series of portraits was actually published. Snouck Hurgronje's archive contains several hundred more glass negatives showing portraits of people from Mecca. These portraits can be subdivided into three groups: first, Mecca's powerful lords and rulers, dignitaries and aristocrats, such as sheikhs, *ashraf* (nobles), and pashas—all of whom were photographed either alone or accompanied by servants—as well as eminent families and the *sada* (descendants of the Prophet); second, the educated classes and representatives of various professions in Mecca, including doctors, scribes, custodians, muezzins, and traders; and third, pilgrims, a category itself embracing a broad spectrum of social strata. Indeed, groups of pilgrims ranged from princes and rich merchants to people of very humble circumstances, including beggars, and all classes and ranks in between. Some people gaze with an expectant smile at the camera lens, while others look mistrustfully and skeptically with fixed, masklike expressions. Their clothing and haircuts give inklings as to their social backgrounds. In many cases, one can sense the dreadful hardships that they must have endured during the pilgrimage. Furthermore, these portrait photographs were not taken in a studio using paid models as was often the case for generic photographs of this type produced in the professional studios of major cities, such as Cairo and Damascus. As a result, they possess exceptional value as anthropological and documentary evidence, and it seems that from the onset, they were made with more scientific rather than commercial intentions in mind.



— 9: Darkroom tent from the time of the wet collodion process, about 1875.



— 10: Snouck Hurgronje, Al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, doctor from Mecca (dates of birth and death unknown).

What makes these documentary photographs appear so modern in style is the way that they anticipate certain photohistorical positions of the twentieth century. Long before August Sander’s volume of photographs, *Antlitz der Zeit* (Face of the age) was published in 1929, this concept of accumulating a photographic document of the history of a particular era and an encyclopedia of persons and types had been developed using glass negatives. In his two-volume work about Mecca and in his *Pictorial atlas*, Snouck Hurgronje set out to investigate the history and social groupings of Mecca, a project of thematic unity through the photographic documentation of particular classes and professional groups. It was not without reason then that he called his album of images a *Pictorial atlas* as he wanted to present a very wide-ranging collection of illustrations from this one endeavor. Only high-ranking dignitaries were mentioned by name; otherwise, Snouck Hurgronje largely avoided giving names to the people portrayed, preferring instead a prosaic, anonymous description, such as “a muezzin,” “a Sayyid,” “a katib” (scribe), or “a doctor of Mecca, his son”—quite typical of the “scenes and types” ethnographic genre. He did not even make an exception in the case of his friend, aide, and photographic assistant, the doctor from Mecca, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar (fig. 10), whose name is not mentioned by Snouck Hurgronje.

AL-SAYYID 'ABD AL-GHAFFAR AND HIS POSITION IN THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF ARABIA

In 1889, immediately after the appearance of the *Pictorial atlas*, a supplementary portfolio was published with the title *Pictures of Mecca*; it contained 20 albumen prints measuring 36.2 × 27 cm pasted on thin card. These images comprised various views of Mecca and its surroundings along with photographs of pilgrims' camps and gatherings of pilgrims, i.e., at Mount Arafat, in the Mina Valley, and at the tomb of the Sit-tana Maymunah. Only a single photograph (No. 17) shows a group of four people riding a camel in the open air; here, mention is made of the son of Sharif Ahmed and his slave. These pictures were taken in August 1887 or 1888 during the pilgrimage time and arrived in Leiden just after the *Pictorial atlas* had been published.

In the preface of this second photographic portfolio, Snouck Hurgronje explained that these pictures had, unfortunately, been passed onto him only after his *Pictorial atlas* had already gone to print by a "doctor of Mecca whom I instructed in photography during my stay in the holy city." The fact that these images were of great importance to Snouck Hurgronje, inasmuch as they supplemented various subjects covered in his recent publication, accounts for the publication of this second portfolio so soon after the first. Nonetheless, in the preface to this portfolio, *Pictures of Mecca*, he felt it necessary to point out that the photographer in question, i.e., the doctor from Mecca whom he had mentioned had not approached his work scientifically or systematically:

"Those who know something of these matters will hardly be surprised that the collection is not ordered according to systematic principles. My former student in photography is, of course, not concerned with the advancement of scientific aims; I am exceptionally grateful when he does, on my urgent request, occasionally allow himself to be guided to work in the desired direction. Hopefully, he has not sent me his last specimens of this art that is despised in Islam."⁵¹

This passage contains important information: here, Snouck Hurgronje explicitly makes a distinction between methodical photography for scientific purposes and unsystematic photography as practiced by his former student. While the tone is critical, the writer's dependence on his middleman in Mecca is no less evident. Indeed, after Snouck Hurgronje's sudden extradition, his old friend was the only contact person who might have been able to supply him with photographs relating to the pilgrimage in Mecca and areas nearby. In actuality, the execution of Snouck Hurgronje's original plan was now being carried on by al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar.

As already pointed out, Snouck Hurgronje never mentioned the doctor by name in his letters, his diaries, the preface to the portfolio of images, or his books.⁵² There

must surely have been a good reason for this. The doctor from Mecca had himself added his name in Arabic to the glass negatives that he sent to Leiden. One can read: “*Fotografiyyah al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, tabib Mecca* (Photography by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, doctor in Mecca).”

When he published the photographic portfolio *Pictures of Makka*, Snouck Hurgronje—for a combination of aesthetic and scientific reasons—almost always erased the name of the person who had taken the picture, which had usually been written in the middle of the lower edge of the original. Sometimes, he also removed the pictures’ titles and headings denoting the places shown, which had been written in the middle of the top edge. On closer inspection though, it is still possible to recognize the Arabic writing.⁵³ Since Snouck Hurgronje regarded photography principally as a means of documentation to be applied in the service of scientific research, there is no reason to think that he erased the names, because he did not want the photographers to be known. It should also be kept in mind that at this time, the prevailing attitudes



toward photography cannot be compared to the present-day situation. Photography was then largely considered a craft or skill in the sense of a reproduction process and rather neglected in the established field of the fine arts. In this light, it is not surprising that Snouck Hurgronje never added his own name to the glass plates of his negatives, let alone that of al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, thus reflecting common copy-right (or lack thereof) and publishing practices of the time.

Another reason why he failed to mention the doctor’s name may have been that after his flight from Mecca, Snouck Hurgronje wanted to protect his namesake, friend, and confidant. Perhaps the doctor would have been prosecuted if it was discovered that he had collaborated with the “European spy and thief” from Leiden and even allowed him to stay in his house for some time. Thus, Snouck Hurgronje’s failure to mention the name of the photographer of these images may well reflect justifiable considerations and caution with respect to his friend’s safety. Why al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar chose to add his name, profession, and place of origin to his own glass



— 11: Tri-partite photography of the pilgrims’ camp by Mount Arafat, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, c. 1887/88 (the three pictures have been merged in a panorama by the author following the obvious intention of ‘Abd al-Ghaffar).

negatives remains a matter of speculation. Either he was proud of being the creator of these images, or he wanted to add a title and his name for the sake of documentary accuracy and classification.

It is still something of a mystery why, after his conversion to Islam in Jeddah, Snouck Hurgronje decided also to assume the name “‘Abd al-Ghaffar” in some of his documents, i.e., the same name as the doctor in Mecca. As far as can be deduced at present, this would seem to have been pure coincidence, because Snouck Hurgronje only knew the doctor later during his stay in Mecca.⁵⁴ With respect to the man, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, little more is known than the fact that he was the first photographer from Mecca. The *Pictorial atlas* contains a portrait (No. XIV), whose subject is, in all probability, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, as its title is “doctor from Mecca.” It shows a man somewhat over 50 years old. On the same card, the *Pictorial atlas* contains another portrait with the title “son of the doctor.” A letter written by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar reveals that he had three sons, from which it is possible to conclude that he was married, had a family, and probably held a respected position.⁵⁵

During the course of the research project undertaken by Jan Just Witkam and the author, Witkam discovered three hitherto unknown letters by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar in the Snouck Hurgronje Archive at Leiden University. These three invaluable documents were written to Snouck Hurgronje after his hurried departure from Mecca, and it is likely that they were sent to Leiden by P.N. van der Chijs. The doctor had long been in close contact with van der Chijs who, in collaboration with a merchant, was actively collecting information, photographs, and objects of ethnological interest, which were then sent from West Arabia to Leiden University. The doctor al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar also played a role as a go-between, not only in Mecca, but also in Jeddah, helping to organize the collection and transfer of such objects.⁵⁶

Witkam has pointed out that these texts reveal that their author was anything but a man of letters with an academic background, because their grammar, spelling, and syntax are sometimes considerably at variance with accepted rules and conventions. It is difficult to achieve an accurate translation of the letters that would be clear and unambiguous. Nonetheless, these documents are uniquely interesting and exciting within the context of the history of photography. They provide precise information about the photographic viewpoints selected by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar for taking pictures, as well as the descriptions of problems and failures concerning the practical implementation of photochemical processes available at the time (figs. 9 and 12):

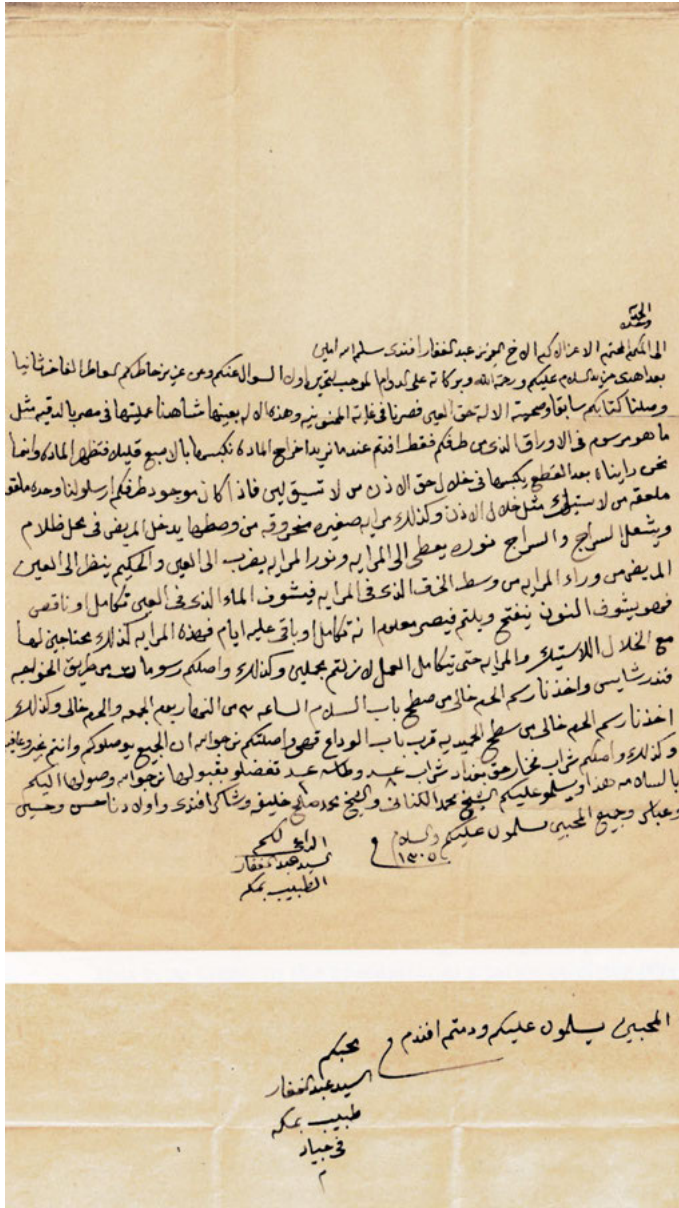
“Glory be to God alone.

To the esteemed, honored, exceptionally distinguished, and generous man, the dear Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghaffar [the name assumed by Snouck Hurgronje in Arabia], may God protect him, Amen.

After saluting you with many greetings and wishes for eternal grace and the blessing of God, the occasion of my letter is firstly to enquire of you and to ask how you are. We pray to God that your health and frame of mind may be excellent. As you know, your distinguished letter has arrived, and we have understood its content.

Everything that you have explained is now known. You informed us about the arrival of the [photographic] paper, and how it is to be used, and it was done so. You informed us about the pulling tight of the curtains [for darkening], so that no slits [admitting light] are visible [?],⁵⁷ and this was to be understood. Be that as it may, O my brother, we do not know the reason why the black comes to the upper side, and I believe that this has to do with the place where we are, as the black slowly develops into the foreground, except when it is seven o'clock during the day when the sun comes down to where we are, and then some things go well, and when it is four o'clock, it is good too.⁵⁸ It is my aim to look for another workplace that is higher, up on the roof or at the rear of the building, so that it is good. We are waiting for the optical instrument [?] that you promised us, as we have promised several people to treat them with it. We are waiting for the piece of optical equipment. You will receive via our friend, Mr. van der Chijs, the [photographic] papers in a box, 48 small and eight large. Among these, there is a picture of the Hamidiyya, of the fortress seen frontally and from the side; also a picture of 'Akarkûn' or 'Karakûn' [It is a police station and refers to the illustration of the 'Hauptwache' in the *Bilder-Atlas zu Mekka*]; a picture of the artillery barracks and one of the hospital in Mina; a picture of the Egyptian *mahmal* close to the Gate of Haram, not far from the house of the governor and that of the Qawass with the governor, the Ottoman pasha, holding the rope [around the neck] of the camel bearing the *mahmal*, and Umar Pasha is also among those who are standing together there. If God so wills it, this [box] will reach you safe and sound. We have asked brother van der Chijs to send us/you [?] a small glass [*darzan*? Lens or glass negative?], and also, if possible, a larger one. You and he can look at it. It is our intention to begin in earnest with the production of rose oil.⁵⁹ In two or three days, we will be going to Ta'if and will be back in Mecca at the end of the month of Sha'ban. We wanted to inform you of this. Our children, 'Abbas, Husayn, and Hasan, send you their greetings, and also Shakir Effendi, Shaykh Muhammad al-Kinani, and Shaykh Muhammad Salih Khalifa salute you and send their best wishes. Your friend, al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar, doctor in Mecca, in the best of health."⁶⁰

In a second letter, there is a passage mentioning which photographic viewpoints had been chosen in accordance with the wishes of Snouck Hurgronje and which images had been forwarded to him in Leiden by way of van der Chijs:



— 12: Undated letter in Arabic written by al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar, doctor from Mecca, to Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghaffar, i.e., Snouck Hurgronje, who had assumed—probably by chance—the same Arabic name as the doctor, Leiden University Libraries. In this remarkable letter, the doctor provides a detailed account of his choice viewpoints for his photographs.

“You should have also received the photographs via Mr. van der Chijs. We took a picture of the Haram when it was empty [of people] from the roof of the Bab al-Salam during the third hour of the day on Friday while the Haram was empty. We also took a picture of the Haram when it was empty from the roof of the Hamidiyya building close to the Bab al-Wada. You will be receiving these. We pray to God that all of them [the photographs] will reach you at a time when you are well and in good health.”⁶¹

It has been considered likely that the photographs in the portfolio *Pictures of Mecca* were taken by the doctor, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, because Snouck Hurgronje made indirect references to these photographs without ever actually mentioning his name. However, the recently discovered letters now provide definitive proof that these images are indeed the work of the doctor from Mecca. The descriptions of the vantage points assumed for the photographs can be confirmed with the images contained in the portfolio.

Another letter written by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, dated 13 Shawwal 1304⁶² (July 5, 1887), also provides insights into the doctor’s efforts to come to terms with photographic techniques and processes.⁶³ For the history of photography, this is a unique document, in which we are given an account of the problems that al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar experienced in handling photographic materials owing to the unfavorable climatic conditions, and how he then attempted to rectify the situation by means of patient improvisation and experimentation:

“Glory be to God alone.

To the esteemed, honored, exceptionally distinguished, and generous man, our dear friend, the Khwaga,⁶⁴ Fandar Shays,⁶⁵ may his life be a long one.

Having conveyed humblest greetings and respect to him, we would first like to ask how you are; secondly: today we received the sheet with the text of the elegy by the poet Bedewi⁶⁶ and the question to the jurists of the Shafi’is about whether the use of *al-tatin*⁶⁷ is permitted against chickenpox, which I received from the late al-Sayyid Ahmad Dahlan, the *mufti* [expounder of Islamic law] of the Shafi’is, and thus we have sent [you] this question, and we entreat God that this has reached you and entreat you to let us know when it reaches you. And we entreat God that the ocular instrument⁶⁸ may arrive in the near future. And that we need it urgently too, we wanted to tell you. And we also inform you that in these days, we were not able—and we do not know why—to make photographs in the darkroom during the extremely hot and sultry weather, as the watering of the glass [negative] did not work properly. The gelatin dissolved and became diffused, owing to the extremely hot and sultry weather. Nonetheless, in the days of the sandstorm, the photographs were acceptable, because the air was dry, and during sultry weather,

the gelatin dissolved rapidly. We do not want to give a final verdict about it, though, until we have tried it many times, because we have only tried it twice and want to try it another two or three times to reach a verdict afterward and to see whether photography produces acceptable results on days of sultry weather and extreme heat.

This is what we wanted to tell you and may you, my lord, have a long life. Written thus on the 13th Shawwal of the year 1304 [July 5, 1887].

Your affectionate friend, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, the doctor.”

3 CONCLUSION

After the photographs of Muhammad Sadiq Bey, those taken by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar can be counted among the earliest photographs to come out of the Arabian region and as important photographic pioneers in the lands of the Hijaz. Among al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar’s photographic œuvre, the images that depict ceremonies during the pilgrimage in August 1887 or 1888 are particularly impressive, as they are of pitched camps of pilgrims under the blazing desert sun by Mount Arafat. Unlike Muhammad Sadiq Bey, the photographer has positioned himself and his camera right in the middle of events, putting himself into direct contact with the crowds of pilgrims. Moreover, in such sweltering heat, it must have been an enormous physical strain to have had to transport a heavy plate camera and “darkroom” tent with supplies of glass plates and chemicals on pack animals and then to prepare the glass negatives with a light-sensitive coating before use.

As al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar did not have a panorama camera at his disposal, he had no option but to take several pictures from different vantage points to obtain the material for a wide-angle view. Only when these different photographic perspectives were combined was he able to achieve a two- or three-part panoramic image of impressive breadth depicting the pilgrims and their tents (fig. 11). While Muhammad Sadiq Bey’s images favored more sweeping and carefully composed views taken from a distance and were characterized by technical perfection, some pictures taken by al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar reveal a close proximity to the depicted scenes, an approach that seems to have brought certain technical flaws in its wake. Owing to the glaring light, some of his photographs seem to have been overexposed with the consequence that certain “burnt out” features of faces and figures had to be retouched on the glass negatives or even drawn in later. A striking feature of these images, some of which have the blurriness of snapshots—yet whose value and interest are in no way diminished by their technical shortcomings—is their curiously ambivalent style, which hovers between documentary reporting and fine art, between authenticity and estrangement.

In summary, the current state of knowledge permits the following comparisons between Muhammad Sadiq Bey and al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar to be made: Muhammad Sadiq Bey was keenly aware of his role as a pioneer, as well as of the professional quality of his photographic endeavors. He submitted his work for exhibitions and received prizes for his pictures. Al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar saw himself more as an experimenter than as a photographic expert, and he attempted to carry on Snouck Hurgronje’s photographic missions when the Dutchman was no longer in a position to pursue it further himself. As a demonstration of loyalty to Snouck Hurgronje, and because he was also commissioned by him, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar photographed what was happening in the pilgrims’ camp. The results were not without imperfections and shortcomings, as is evident when one looks at them today. Although he could have never have imagined it, he is now numbered among the pioneers of photography in Arabia.

NOTES

- 1 In his preface, Burkhardt, *Reisen in Arabien*, pointed out the difficulty of a precise geographical demarcation of the Hijaz, as there were differing opinions on this matter during his lifetime: “[A]ccording to European writers, Arabia is divided into three great regions: Stony, Desert and Fortunate Arabia; in contrast, Oriental geographers divide it into two, five, six, seven, and more provinces and attach names to them that are no longer in accordance with those of the Greeks and Romans” (ibid., vi). The areas of the Hijaz are all now in modern-day Saudi Arabia.
- 2 Von Maltzan, *Wallfahrt*, 22. Exploring the Islamic-Arab cultural region was Heinrich von Maltzan’s dream and goal. In 1860 in Algiers, he bribed a hashish-smoker to give him a passport, with which he traveled to Mecca disguised as a Muslim. In a Turkish bath, he was found out, because he had not been circumcised. He narrowly escaped death by fleeing the country immediately.
- 3 “Wady El-Hamd marked the limit of Egyptian rule at that time. North of it, it was possible for Europeans, such as [Richard Francis] Burton [1821–1890], to travel under the aegis of that rule; further south, this good fortune deserted them. The Arabs are usually suspicious of strangers, and above all, of those who do not belong to the faith. The approaches to the Holy Places are jealously guarded, and the use of [photographic] instruments and apparatuses is made impossible through the constant watchfulness and vigilance of the natives” (Amer, “Egyptian Explorer,” 35).
- 4 “Un visiteur non musulman y serait immédiatement égorgé, à moins qu’il soit bien déguisé et protégé par un musulman de grande considération”; Sadik, “Médine,” 8.
- 5 In the Ottoman Empire, *bey* denoted a military rank—roughly equivalent to “colonel”—and a moderately high position in the civil administration; like titles such as *pasha*, *agha*, and *effendi*, it was placed after the holder’s name. The title was abolished in Turkey in 1932 and in Egypt in 1953.

- 6 "It was not unusual at this time for commercial photographers to publish other photographers' material under their own names." Thus, in the first portfolio of the *Pictorial atlas* published by Hurgronje, pictures taken by Muhammad Sadiq Bey showing the Kaaba during a ceremony bear the name of Sulayman Hakim, a photographer from Damascus. See Facey/Grant, *Saudia Arabia*, 26.
- 7 The main subject of his training was probably surveying, which was among the skills required of a geometer or geodesist.
- 8 From the fifteenth century, the title *pasha* denoted the highest-ranking civil servants and military officers in the Ottoman Empire. A pasha's rank was above that of a bey but below that of a vizier.
- 9 A mahmal (or *mahmil*) was an adorned camel-litter that was sent by Muslim rulers every year with the caravan of pilgrims to Mecca as a symbol of their royal office and autonomous political sovereignty.
- 10 Sadiq Bey, *Nubdha*. This is a description of a journey made in 1860, published with a military map of the route followed. Jan Just Witkam was most helpful in translating this and Muhammad Sadiq Bey's other titles from the original Arabic.
- 11 Sadiq Bey, *Mash'al*.
- 12 Sadiq Bey, *Kawkab*.
- 13 Sadiq Bey, *Dalil al-hajj*.
- 14 Sadik, "Médine," 5–32; "Médine" [II], 5–15. In "Médine," there are two engravings based on photographs by Muhammad Sadiq Bey showing a panorama of Medina and the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 15 Amer, "Egyptian Explorer," 29.
- 16 Fikri, *Rihla*. In his book, Fikri reprinted all four books by Muhammad Sadiq Bey, which are still only available in Arabic.
- 17 Amer, "Egyptian Explorer," 29. Amer's article is illustrated with the following reproductions: a portrait photograph with the caption "Colonel Mohamed Sadek Pasha," showing him wearing a suit, necktie, and fez; a map of his itinerary from Medina to Yambo El Baha and al-Wajh; a ground plan of the Haram of Medina drawn up by Muhammad Sadiq Bey; and two engravings based on photographs by Muhammad Sadiq Bey, a panorama of Medina and the Haram of Medina.
- 18 Ibid., 37.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Sadik, "Médine," 5, 6.
- 22 Probably some form of tachometer for the rapid measurement of points on a survey, such as distance and elevation.
- 23 Muhammad Sadiq Bey, *Mash'al*, 16, quoted in Fikri, *Rihla*, preface.
- 24 Sadik, "Médine," 9: "J'ai eu le bonheur de pouvoir prendre un plan exact de la mosquée et une vue photographique de sa façade du sud, ainsi qu'une vue générale de la ville du Tophané, le fort qui est à droite de la porte Bab-el-Gami [entrance gateway of Medina]."
- 25 Sadik "Médine."
- 26 Amer, "Egyptian Explorer."
- 27 Ibid., 36.
- 28 Sadek Bey, *Short Account*, quoted in Amer, "Egyptian Explorer," 35 n. 1.

- 29 A single copy is now to be found in the Egyptian Library in Cairo. Amer, "Egyptian Explorer," 30.
- 30 *Journal of the staff of the Egyptian Army 1877*, 359–376, quoted by Amer, "Egyptian Explorer," 30 n. 1. Volumes IV and VI were apparently not printed. In the Egyptian Library in Cairo, the *Journal* was catalogued as no. 64 of the military publication.
- 31 Amer, "Egyptian Explorer," 44, 45; and Sadik, "Médine," 10–15.
- 32 This tradition lasted until 1960 when King Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud (r. 1953–1964) founded Saudi Arabia's own production facility for the yearly *kiswah*, which generated further resentment between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Saudi historical records trace their own precedence for *kiswa* production back to 1927.
- 33 Muhammad Sadiq Bey, *Mash'al*, 35, quoted in Fikri, *Rihla*, 114.
- 34 Muhammad Sadiq Bey, *Mash'al*, 28, quoted in Fikri, *Rihla*, 106.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Muhammad Sadiq Bey, *Mash'al*, 45, quoted in Fikri, *Rihla*, 127.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Muhammad Sadiq Bey, *Dalil*.
- 39 Fikri, *Rihla*.
- 40 Johannes Zimmermann drew my attention to this peculiarity with respect to Muhammad Sadiq Bey's talent for spatial observation in his writings.
- 41 Sotheby's 1998.
- 42 For his unwavering support and invaluable ideas and suggestions, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Prof. Dr. Jan Just Witkam, professor emeritus of Paleography and Codicology of the Islamic World at the University of Leiden/Netherlands. He is a recognized expert on the work of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. My initial questions gave rise to a close collaboration that eventually developed into a larger research project. Neither of us could have suspected how extensive and full of detail our investigation of Snouck Hurgronje and his "namesake," the doctor al-Sayyid Abd al-Ghaffar from Mecca, would become. Witkam described our close and cordial co-operation as follows: "You have put questions to me, which I could only answer by being very precise and concrete. And as you have learned from my answers, I have learned from your questions." Personal correspondence between Jan Just Witkam and the author, May 17, 2006.
- 43 It is highly likely that Jan Goedelje (1824–1905), a well-known photographer living and working in Leiden at this time, provided Snouck Hurgronje with help and information concerning photographic techniques, as well as the photographic materials and equipment that he would have needed for such an expedition to the Hijaz.
- 44 The colored lithographs were printed in Leiden on card in the same format as the photographs. This mode of printed reproduction was chosen to give a better impression of spatial depth and in instances when long photographic exposures had resulted in group scenes being blurred, such as in photograph No. VIII, showing African slaves with a *tumburah* [orchestra].
- 45 Faroqhi, *Herrscher*, 231–233. Faroqhi has suggested that Snouck Hurgronje, a member of the colonial administration, also intended to find out information about the motives of Indonesian Muslim pilgrims, of which there were so many at this time. For this reason, "the Dutch colonial government, which administered Java, Sumatra, and the other

islands of present-day Indonesia, feared that, during their stay in the holy cities, pilgrims would become acquainted with pan-Islamic ideas. Therefore, in the Hijaz, the Dutch colonial government saw a potentially subversive group and made an effort to keep the number of pilgrims as low as possible [...]. [Snouck Hurgronje] probably regarded the political effects of a stay in Mecca as less dramatic than was thought by many Dutch colonial officials and may well have been of the opinion that one should avoid politicizing people who were not yet politicized by all too obviously setting up obstacles for the pilgrims. The technical aspects of his stay in the holy city were entirely subordinate to the political.”

- 46 When Langer set out from Aden intent on reaching the inner part of Hadhramaut, he appears to have been robbed and murdered by his Yemeni guides. According to the research of Jan Just Witkam, Snouck Hurgronje received this photograph sometime after July 15, 1888, from P.N. van der Chijs (d. 1889), vice-consul of the Netherlands and consul of Sweden in Jeddah. While on a trip to Europe, van der Chijs posted a letter from Wageningen in the Netherlands to Snouck Hurgronje containing Langer's photograph with the remark: “[E]nclosed the photograph once taken by Langer.”
- 47 Snouck Hurgronje, *Mecca*, I, xix.
- 48 From the results of recent research and thanks to my close collaboration with Witkam, who is in charge of the Snouck Hurgronje Archive at Leiden University, it may be assumed that most of these photographs were taken by Snouck Hurgronje himself in Mecca, and some are the work of his aforementioned student, the doctor from Mecca, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar.
- 49 Van der Wal, *Hurgronje*.
- 50 Invented by Robert D. Gray in 1886, the concealed vest camera enjoyed great popularity in the United States and abroad. It was designed to take six exposures on a circular dry-plate through the buttonhole of a vest.
- 51 Snouck Hurgronje, *Pictures*, preface.
- 52 Personal correspondence between Jan Just Witkam and the author, May 5, 2006.
- 53 Peters, *Hajj*, xiv. In the preface, Peters writes that in London in 1981, Allen and Carney Gavin, together with a team from the King Fahd Archives (KFA), were able to decipher the erased Arabic name of the photographer. It would appear that Allen and Carney Gavin were unaware that the same script is clearly legible on the glass negatives kept in the Snouck Hurgronje Archive at Leiden University which were not used to make prints intended for publication.
- 54 Exchange of letters between Jan Just Witkam and the author, May 5, 2006.
- 55 A second portrait of al-Ghaffar has been published in a book by Jan Just Witkam.
- 56 Exchange of letters between Jan Just Witkam and the author, May 18, 2006.
- 57 The lightproof curtain must have served to darken a room, so that glass negatives could be prepared and developed.
- 58 The meaning here is only speculative: If al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffar is referring to photographic paper becoming black, this would mean that it had not been sufficiently protected against the intrusion of incidental light. If he means the glass plates, these also may have turned black due to unwanted light falling on them before their exposure in the camera. It is also possible that when placing the light-sensitive plates into the plate camera, he forgot to close the lens shutter. The intensity of sunlight varies according to

the time of day and the position of the sun, affecting exposure times, and too long an exposure time would result in an overexposed (black) negative.

- 59 Selling rose oil to tourists and pilgrims offered a supplementary source of income. It looks as though the doctor al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar was intending to do some business with this commodity.
- 60 Letter in Arabic written by al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar, doctor from Mecca, undated, translation by Witkam. The letter was written before the month of Sha'ban in an unknown year to Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghaffar (i.e., Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje). The letter measures 32.8 × 20.1 cm and is written and signed in ink, using the naskhi Arabic script. The Snouck Hurgronje Archive, Leiden University, The Netherlands, inventory number: Or. 18.097, S 32. Jan Just Witkam has remarked that this letter is difficult to understand, owing to its irregular grammar, spelling, and syntax.
- 61 Letter in Arabic written by al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ghaffar, doctor from Mecca, in about 1305 (September 19, 1887–September 8, 1888) to 'Abd al-Ghaffar Effendi (i.e., Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje), translation by Witkam. Writing paper (watermark: Shaykh Ahmed Shaykh Dawood, 1887), 33.7 × 21.4 cm, two pages, text on one side in naskhi script, written in ink and signed. Snouck Hurgronje Archive, Leiden University, The Netherlands, inventory number: Or. 18.097, S 32.
- 62 Shawwal is the tenth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The hajj takes place during the first 10 days of the twelfth month of the lunar calendar.
- 63 Dimensions, 25.7 × 22.2 cm, text written on one side of the page in naskhi script using ink. Snouck Hurgronje Archive, Leiden University, The Netherlands, inventory number: Or. 8952, s.v. 'Abd al-Ghaffar.
- 64 Title of respect given to a non-Muslim European.
- 65 Hurgronje, *Pictures*, xxi, pointed out: "The gentlemen, J. a. KRUYT, general consul of The Netherlands in Pinang (until the beginning of 1885 in Jeddah) and P. N. VAN DER CHIJS, consul of Sweden and vice-consul of The Netherlands in Jeddah, have such a prominent share in the success of my enterprise that their names should, instead of being noted in its preface, actually be included on the title-page of this book."
- 66 The Arabic text of this poem of mourning by Shaykh Badawi, "On the Death of the Grand-Sharif Abdallah," dating from 1877, is quoted in Hurgronje, *Pictures*, 226–228.
- 67 It has so far proved impossible to ascertain which substance is referred to here.
- 68 In the letter, the term used is *al-'ala haqq al-'ayn*, which literally means "the instruments of the eye." It is not entirely clear what may have been meant by this, but it is unlikely to have been the lenses of spectacles. It would seem to be referring to the lenses of a camera, the camera itself, or various optical apparatuses.

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4–6: © Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim/Forum Internationale Photographie.

7: Leiden University Libraries, Or. 8952 L5: 18.

12: Leiden University Libraries, Or. 18.097 S 32.6.

RELOCATING SEVRUGUIN:
CONTEXTUALIZING THE POLITICAL CLIMATE
OF THE IRANIAN PHOTOGRAPHER ANTOIN SEVRUGUIN
(C. 1851–1933)

The Iranian photographer Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1851–1933) stopped using one of his photographic imprints sometime after 1900 (fig. 1). This older one from circa 1892 says in Persian that he is an “‘akkas-e rus” (Russian photographer), yet he later dropped that title (and imprint altogether).¹ He also used another photographic imprint, which scholars have suggested is a newer one, although Sevruguin used both imprints until at least 1900 (fig. 2).² In the latter, he no longer refers to himself as a Russian photographer but in Persian as “Antoin Khan,” using an honorific title bestowed by the Iranian monarchy. Little did he know that the dropped qualification of being a “Russian photographer” would later haunt him almost a century after his death, creating a crisis of identity for scholars now. It was a minute elimination in text but powerful nonetheless as a calculated move, however unknown and fascinating in light of his own self-fashioning. In this paper, I argue that the withdrawal of this particular photographic imprint was in fact a nationalist and political statement.

Sevruguin was one of the most famous photographers of Qajar Iran (1785–1925) and prolific throughout his long life, producing and selling many photographs, which can now be found in museums and collections all over the world and have been instrumental in creating and in disseminating discursive knowledge on Iran. Indeed, if there were an authorial gaze and vision that helped defined Qajar Iran, it was through Sevruguin’s eyes. He was famous during his lifetime, with his photographs published in contemporaneous books, although not always attributed to him, and both Iranians and foreigners commissioned his services to fill their archives and albums. Framing Sevruguin’s contributions in this way points to several issues that warrant discussion as scholars struggle to situate his worldview in constructing Qajar Iran through his lens. In our modern quest to classify and to categorize, including my own, scholars have identified and described him in various ways that affect our interpretations of him and his oeuvre, such as calling him a “Westerner,” an “Orientalist,” a “Russian,” a “Georgian,” an “Armenian,” an “Iranian,” or a combination of two or more. How could one person elicit so many different labels, identities, and interpretations from others, based on a certain set of facts? Why does his identity and position change in the



— 1: Antoin Sevruguin, Photographic Imprint, c. 1892, older photographic imprint of Sevruguin that says he is an “akkas-e rus” (Russian photographer), Kimia Foundation, New York City. — 2: Antoin Sevruguin, Photographic Imprints, c. 1900, newer photographic imprint of Sevruguin that has eliminated “akkas-e rus” (Russian photographer) and now says “Antoin Khan,” Kimia Foundation, New York City.

discourses, depending on whom is writing on him? More importantly, who was he, what was he, and why are these questions even important in understanding his legacy? In an attempt to unravel several meanings and intentions behind Sevruguin's identity, biography, and photography, I suggest that one must do so through the political climates of both the Caucasus and Qajar Iran during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historically situating him within volatile, unstable, and revolutionary events that may have shaped his psyche and self-fashioning and contributed to the elimination of one of his photographic imprints, which serve as both identification and advertisement to those in the present and in the future. When he is viewed through these political lenses of the region, scholars may be able to reconsider

how to place and to label him within (Iranian) photohistory, thus becoming more cognizant of how they position him within those historical narratives.

Before moving forward on what information is available to scholars regarding Sevruguin's origins and intentions about his own self-fashioning, "identity" in the context of this chapter should be defined. "Identity" is not a concrete thing, but a set of discursive practices that is performative, ideological, and constructed by social, historical, and political circumstances. In this way, identity is not a pure or stable phenomenon but a composite that is continually fluid and unfixed. It could be then that Sevruguin was everything and nothing in relation to how scholars (including myself) define his position in the history of Iranian photography. Yet it seems that calling Sevruguin an "Orientalist," for example, serves certain arguments and agendas, just as much as my describing him as "Iranian." With that said, the ultimate goal of this essay is to show the ways that the actual political contexts in which Sevruguin lived may have affected his own understanding of himself and how he may have wished to present himself at various times to those around him—as opposed to the ways that later contemporary scholarship assumes particular, literal designations in understanding his photography, that have provided concrete framings around how his vision has historically been constructed. Regardless of Sevruguin's "true" identity revealed, however, I would like to keep in mind the concept of "cultural citizenship," as defined by Renato Rosaldo:

"Cultural citizenship refers to the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense. It claims that, in a democracy, social justice calls for equity among all citizens, even when such differences as race, religion, class, gender, or sexual orientation potentially could be used to make certain people less equal or inferior to others. The notion of belonging means full membership in a group and the ability to influence one's destiny by having a significant voice in basic decisions."³

By invoking this definition of "cultural citizenship" I want to underscore that even if an exact origin could or could not be defined for Sevruguin, it was ultimately the political situation of the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) in Iran that made its subjects "Iranian" by national definition, including Sevruguin himself, who was a cultural citizen and a democratic participant. The revolution had been a struggle to create a constitutional monarchy and to ensure parliamentary representation for all its citizens. So whether scholars now find it necessary to dictate who can speak for whom based on one's origins, how nationhood and citizenship were defined in an artist's own particular era should also be of historic concern.

THE ORIGINS OF SEVRUGUIN?

Sevruguin is not usually or always considered an “Iranian” photographer with renowned scholars labeling him a “Western” photographer and sometimes more specifically as “Russian” (or even “French”), implying that he was an outsider or not Iranian, and therefore he depicted the world differently than “Iranian” photographers and did not invoke the local photographic practices on the ground.⁴ The ‘Akskhaneh-ye Shahr (City Photo Museum) in Tehran and the *Tehran Times* called him a “Georgian” photographer in the retrospective at the museum in April 2014.⁵ This identification was also used in Yahya Zoka’s seminal *The History of Photography and Pioneer Photographers in Iran* (1997).⁶ So why is there no scholarly consensus on his origins? Sevruguin was born in Tehran, spoke Persian fluently, and learned his photographic trade while in Georgia, which had been part of Iran at the turn of the nineteenth century—a contested territory between Iran and Tsarist Russia until it was officially conceded to Russia in the Treaty of Golestan (1813). Moreover, Sevruguin lived most of his life in Iran, made contacts with some of the most powerful men of the Qajar Dynasty, married an Iranian-Armenian woman from Tehran (Louisa/Lizaveta Gourgenian, 1866–1950), and all his children were born and raised in Iran. According to his grandson Emanuel, Antoin even added to his name *parvardeh-ye Iran* (nurtured by Iran)⁷ to the official surname on his Iranian *shenasnameh* (birth certificate)⁸—possessing a *shenasnameh* is a significant indicator of Iranian nationality—and this phrase is also on his children’s and his grandchildren’s passports.⁹

Much of what scholars know of Sevruguin’s heritage and origin is based on information provided by his grandson Emanuel Sevrugian, who has his own vision and understanding of his grandfather’s legacy, even though Donna Stein had already brought Antoin prominently into Iranian photography literature in the 1980s.¹⁰ Emanuel had written several letters in the 1990s to Susan Nemazee, explaining that Antoin’s father Vasil (born c. 1818)¹¹ was an ethnic Armenian employed by the tsarist Russian government,¹² and that Vasil, like other Armenians and Greeks who had worked for tsarist Russia, was required to take a Russian name.¹³ He suggests that Vasil did not consider himself Russian; rather, it was an identity imposed on him if he were to become a government representative. However, the name “de Sevruguine,” originally “Sevrugian,” had been changed and passed down from Vasil’s own father.¹⁴ According to the “Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849” documented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vasil had attended the Imperial Kazan University, graduated in Philosophy in 1843, and then “entered the department of Eastern languages founded at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”¹⁵ In 1845, he went to Iran on behalf of tsarist Russia.

Cultural critic Souren Melikian has noted that scholars do not know Vasil’s origins exactly, but he suspects that Vasil may have been an Armenian from Russian-

controlled Azerbaijan.¹⁶ He also mentions that Sevruguin translated Persian words and terms to foreign audiences with what is now called an “Azeri” or *Torki* pronunciation and that of all the languages listed in the scholarly literature that Sevruguin knew, Azeri or *Torki* is never mentioned.¹⁷ But if Vasil did not have a connection to Russian-controlled Azerbaijan, certainly Sevruguin had lived in Baku and in Tabriz before settling in Tehran, and so one would have assumed that he was fluent in Azeri. After all, Azeri was the second most spoken language in Iran at the time, after Persian, if not as equally dominant.¹⁸

As for Sevruguin’s mother, Achin Khanoum, the grandson Emanuel claimed that she resented all things Russian.¹⁹ She was born in Tbilisi (Tiflis), but Melikian makes another Azeri connection based on her name “Achin Khanoum,” which “is a polite form of address in Turki, the equivalent of Miss or Mrs. Ashin, and Ashin is the Turkicized pronunciation of the Armenian Ashkhen.”²⁰ I suspect then that Achin Khanoum was not ethnically Georgian, as she is commonly described in the literature by scholars, but also Armenian, as Tbilisi had a sizable Armenian population and still does. After Vasil’s untimely death sometime in 1859 or thereafter, Achin Khanoum moved back to Tbilisi with her seven children.²¹ Corien Vuurman and Theo Martens state that Tbilisi became too expensive for the widow, so they moved to a smaller city in Georgia, Akoulis, where the children went to school.²² But “Akoulis” is actually another name for the city Agulis,²³ which would later become the contentious city in Nakhchivan, an area between modern-day Iran and Armenia, now part of Azerbaijan, and from where Shah Abbas I (r. 1588–1629) first invited and then later forcibly relocated Armenians from Julfa to New Julfa.²⁴

Vuurman and Martens also state that all seven Sevruguin children were born in Iran,²⁵ which would put Antoin’s date of birth sometime after 1845, according to Vasil’s record of service. Antoin was the second son, while his brother Emmanuel (not to be confused with the grandson) was the last son, born in 1858, according to his gravestone (fig. 3). Based on the information that Emanuel Sevrugian gave to Corien Vuurman, Antoin Sevruguin died in his 90s in 1933, but later, Emanuel told Krasberg that he died at age 82, which would have placed his birth year around 1851. This birth year would make more sense in relation to Vasil’s record of service.²⁶ There were also three daughters whose names and lives are unknown.²⁷ When Achin Khanoum finally moved back to Tbilisi sometime in the 1860s, the eldest brother Ivan had already been admitted to a military academy.²⁸ Vuurman and Martens continue that the brothers Antoin, Kolia, and Emmanuel finished school in Agulis, studying French,²⁹ and through her interviews with the grandson Emanuel, Ulrike Krasberg identifies this school as the “Perch-Proshian school.”³⁰ It may have been true that Achin Khanoum retired to the city of Agulis, but according to the grandson Emanuel, only the brothers Kolia and Emmanuel went to Perch Proshyan School, which was in Tbilisi; that would make sense, as Ivan and Antoin were the two eldest.³¹ Yet, there was actually no Perch



— 3: Emmanuel Sevruguin's gravestone, 1914, (next to the grave of Antoin's wife Louisa/Lizaveta Gourgenian, 1866–1950). Gravestone of Emmanuel Sevruguin confirms his birth and death dates, Russian section of Doulab Cemetery in Tehran.

Proshyan School this early on or in Tbilisi (the modern-day school is in Ashtarak, Armenia) although the famous writer Proshyan (1837–1907) taught in Tbilisi during the late 1860s–1870s and was possibly their instructor at the Nersisyan School (1824–1924) instead. If Antoin had attended the Nersisyan School, it would have been immediately after the family moved to Tbilisi, not to Agulis. Furthermore, when Sevruguin's brothers Kolia and Emmanuel graduated from what I assume was the Nersisyan School, which did offer French,³² all three brothers obtained positions as bookkeepers to a rich merchant in Baku, which Antoin declined. According to the grandson Emanuel, Antoin would join the two brothers later in Baku after he studied photography with Dmitri Ermakov (1845–1916),³³ a prominent photographer in Tbilisi.

Ermakov opened his photography studio in Tbilisi in 1870³⁴ although this date is disputed.³⁵ Nonetheless, this time frame would have made the brother Emmanuel only twelve years old; hence, the three brothers must have departed for Baku closer to the mid-1870s, after Antoin's time with Ermakov, or his studies with Ermakov were the reason that he did not take the position in Baku. Dating these events is particu-

larly important, as scholars have placed Sevruguin's permanent return to Tehran around the early 1870s, which would have been impossible, considering the confirmed birth year of Emmanuel in 1858, and that the Sevruguin studio was supposed to be a joint business venture between Antoin, Kolia, and Emmanuel; thus, it only a later date of arrival in Iran seems plausible.

Why Sevruguin returned to Iran to officially setup his photography business is not exactly known and has been framed by some writers as nostalgia, "perhaps inspired by his childhood memories."³⁶ Inspiration from his work with Ermakov might have been another factor, as Ermakov had completed photographic studies of Iran and the Caucasus before 1870. By 1870, Ermakov's photographic imprint included the emblem of the Qajar monarchy, the *shir-o khorshid* (the lion and the sun), with the words "His Highness, the Shah of Persia" in Russian.³⁷ For a brief time in 1870, Ermakov had worked in the 'Akkaskhaneh-ye Madreseh-ye Mobarakeh (Royal School Photography Studio) of the polytechnic Dar al-Fonun (est. 1851; now part of Tehran University) in Tehran and taught there, capable in the French and Persian languages,³⁸ and had received the title of 'Akkashashi (Court Photographer) from the king, Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–1896).³⁹ I suggest, then, that it must have been Ermakov who provided the important introduction and contact for Sevruguin to approach the governor of Iranian Azerbaijan and *vali-ʿahd* (heir elect), Mozaffar al-Din Mirza Qajar (1853–1907), and the court in Tabriz. Zoka' states that Sevruguin was already famous when he reached Tabriz (Zoka' dates this arrival around 1873 or later);⁴⁰ it is highly plausible that Ermakov, as Sevruguin's teacher, mentor, and colleague, played a role in advancing his career.

Sevruguin's return to Iran may have been motivated by other factors in addition to Ermakov's fame and connection to the Qajar court. Sevruguin's first photography studio was established in Tabriz in the 1870s, according to my estimate around the time of Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), in which Ermakov had participated as a military photographer in the Field Photographic Section of the General Staff of the Caucasus Army.⁴¹ As Ermakov went to war, the Sevruguin brothers, including Emmanuel, also would have been of age to serve, along with the many other Armenians and Georgians who participated in the Caucasian theatre, one of the two major fronts of the war.⁴² It is possible that to avoid the conflict, the brothers left the Caucasus altogether with Ermakov's recommendation of Sevruguin to the Qajar court. Whenever the exact date of the arrival of the Sevruguin brothers in Tabriz, Sevruguin translated Alphonse Liebert's *La Photographie au Charbon* (1876) as *Fann-e ʿakkasi* (The art of photography) for Mozaffar al-Din Mirza by 1878. Moreover, in relation to Emmanuel's age, the war, and this translation of Liebert's piece, all the evidence points to their arrival in Iran around 1877. It would not be until 1883 (or later), however, when the brothers would open a studio in Tehran on 'Ala' al-Dowleh Street (later Ferdowsi Avenue),⁴³ which was in one of the most advantageous parts of the city, occupied by politicians,

diplomats, and Qajar officials.⁴⁴ But apart from these circumstances, while in Baku there was also a murder attempt on Emmanuel, resulting in the loss of an eye.⁴⁵ This is why in photographs, he usually wears dark glasses to hide the injury, thus always making him recognizable. Although my evidence here is circumstantial, it seems that the three brothers might have also escaped to Iran to evade some trouble that Emmanuel was in—or, at least, it was one more incentive to leave the Caucasus. With their mother and sisters in Agulis, there was no reason to remain in Baku or Tbilisi, thus giving the brothers an opportunity to move elsewhere.

Revisiting Sevruguin's two photographic imprints, what could have been the reasons that he first used and then eliminated the title "akkas-e rus" (Russian photographer)? Frederick Bohrer makes an interesting observation that this switch in identification was printed in Persian only.⁴⁶ Otherwise, the text in French did not change. Although many foreigners in Tehran most likely knew some level of Persian, Sevruguin was communicating this alteration specifically to (educated) Iranians about where his allegiance lie or had changed. Considering how successful, famous, and savvy Sevruguin was, I speculate that this was a calculated move—whether it was political, commercial, and/or just a deeper understanding of his identity while living in Iran, it was not a minor edit. By adding and keeping "khan" on his later imprints he



— 4: Antoin Sevruguin, Photographic Imprint, c. 1897, Kimia Foundation, New York City. It does not have the honorific title of "khan."

further consolidated his position within Tehranian, Iranian, and Qajar societies as a fully participating member, even though two of his sons eventually joined the Cos-sacks,⁴⁷ but so did Reza Shah (r. 1925–1941). In the grandson Emanuel's letters of the 1990s, he writes that he actually does not remember which king gave Sevruguin the title of "khan."⁴⁸ According to Mohammadreza Tahmasbpour, it is not documented in any primary sources that Naser al-Din Shah made Sevruguin a court photographer or bestowed onto him any special distinctions whereas other *'akkasbashis* have been noted.⁴⁹ Naser al-Din Shah was assassinated in 1896—if Sevruguin had been given that title by Naser, it seems that he would have invoked that distinction much earlier in his career, particularly on the first imprint. It would appear, then, that Sevruguin had received the title from Mozaffar al-Din Shah, not his father Naser al-Din, considering that Sevruguin had developed such a close relationship with Mozaffar while in Tabriz. Vuurman alludes to this connection, implying that it was his winning of the international expositions in Brussels (1897) and in Paris (1900) that earned him the title "khan."⁵⁰ According to an imprint after 1897, he still does not bear the title "khan," so it would have been in 1900 that he was called "khan" (fig. 4). However, with both those two dates in mind, it could have only been Mozaffar al-Din Shah who gave him the honorific title.

SEVRUGUIN AS REVOLUTIONARY

I posit that Sevruguin's consciousness of his identity came to a head during the political contentions in the Caucasus, as well as during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, thus possibly playing a factor in the elimination of the title "*'akkas-e rus*" from his earlier photographic imprint. By the late nineteenth century, the tsarist government had begun implementing discriminatory measures toward its Armenian subjects, and in Iran there were many catalytic events that mobilized and inspired the masses against European imperialism, such as the Tobacco Protest (1890–1892), which eventually lead to the Constitutional Revolution.

Sevruguin was in his fifties when the revolution began to percolate, and he and his family were constitutionalists.⁵¹ Mozaffar al-Din Shah had signed the constitution in 1906 and then died in 1907. Meanwhile, at the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the British and the Russians struck a deal to split Iran into spheres of influence in order to protect their varied imperial interests, with the British in the south and the Russians in the north. Soon after Mozaffar al-Din's death, his son and successor Mohammad-^cAli Shah (r. 1907–1909) allied with the Russian government and its military to disband the constitution and to re-establish an absolute monarchy in Iran through armed force. In 1908, Sevruguin's studio was destroyed by fire when a group of buildings and residences were attacked by anti-constitutionalists.⁵² His studio was located in his

home, next door to Mirza ‘Ali Khan Qajar Davalu (1864–1924), also known as Zahir al-Dowleh and Safi-‘Ali Shah, who was a son-in-law to Naser al-Din Shah and his Grand Master of Ceremonies. On June 24, 1908, the anti-constitutionalists in cooperation with the Russian military targeted Zahir al-Dowleh’s residence and his neighborhood, in addition to bombarding the Majles a day earlier on June 23. The Russian colonel in charge of those attacks, Vladimir Liakhov (1819–c. 1919), had been a friendly associate of Sevruguin only eight years earlier.⁵³ In that attack, thousands of glass plates in Sevruguin’s studio (the actual number recorded varies) were completely destroyed, and he was devastated.⁵⁴ Actually, the entire street with all its buildings were bombed and damaged as all the occupants there were considered constitutionalists. During that time, Tehran itself became a war zone, and the Sevruguin family, along with other constitutionalists, sought *bast* (refuge) in the British Embassy to hide from the anti-constitutionalists as the British Empire supported the constitution in theory but dared not to interfere and to break their agreement with tsarist Russia.⁵⁵

Sevruguin has been described as a “scenes and types” photographer, ethnographer, and a portraitist who did not photograph major events and certainly not images of the revolution.⁵⁶ This characterization of his oeuvre, however, is based on extant slides and prints; we must not forget that thousands of slides were damaged during the revolution, and then later part of his collection was confiscated and partially destroyed by Reza Shah Pahlavi’s government.⁵⁷ Which images Reza Shah had eliminated is questionable as images of the revolution would have been targeted when he took full power in December 1925 and rescinded the constitutional monarchy signed into law by Mozaffar al-Din Shah. As historian Ali Gheissari writes: “Once Reza Khan became monarch, all talk of a republic was shelved. As a result [...] the promise of the Constitutional Revolution remained unresolved.”⁵⁸ Nonetheless, one of the most famous surviving photographs by Sevruguin is the 1896 execution of Naser al-Din Shah’s assassin Mirza Reza Kermani, so certainly he was a recorder of events, as well as of scenes and types. Aphrodite Desirée Navab has noted that the inclusion of Sevruguin’s shadow (and hence his self-portrait—his shadow was a common motif in his photographs) in the execution photograph signals a modern consciousness of participating in current events: “Do not forget that I was there at that moment, at that turbulent time in Iran’s history.”⁵⁹ Arman Stepanian also lists Sevruguin among the great photographers of the Qajar era who documented major events, such as “executions and the burial of heroes, pro-constitutional struggles, and executions of criminals.”⁶⁰ Finally, film scholar Hamid Naficy has noted that several of the photographs of the revolution in contemporaneous newspapers and postcards were those of Sevruguin.⁶¹

There are extant photographs by Sevruguin that do in fact depict the revolution. One of the most striking is from Zoka’s *History of Photography* that shows the constitutionalists taking *bast* in the British Embassy in Tehran in 1906 (fig. 5). There are also three



— 5: Antoin Sevruguin, Constitutionals taking bast in the British Embassy in Tehran, 1906, Antoin Sevruguin was a photographer of the Constitutional Revolution. Whereabouts unknown (University of Tehran?).

other photographs in the Smithsonian collections of protestors taking bast, which are very similar to the one chosen by Zoka' and possibly taken at the same time.⁶² The dating of this photograph would indicate that Sevruguin was a pro-constitutionalist during the revolution's early stages as it would have been difficult to imagine a pro-Russian, anti-constitutionalist being allowed inside the tent of protestors to take their photographs.⁶³ The Smithsonian also houses a Sevruguin photograph that depicts the Houses of Parliament in Tehran, which were established immediately in 1906, although the photograph dates much later, possibly under the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925–1979)⁶⁴ when the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution were stymied by Reza Shah—perhaps a poignant image of silent protest. Also notable is a 1930 photograph Sevruguin took of Saeyyed Hasan Modarres (1870–1937), who was a great constitutionalist cleric and an influence on Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989).

An authentic Sevruguin photograph shows what appears to be a post-constitutional celebration at the house of Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Amin al-Zarb,⁶⁵ a constitutionalist and the son of Hajj Mohammad Hasan Amin al-Zarb (1837–1898), a wealthy merchant who had been in charge of the royal mint (fig. 6).⁶⁶ According to photohistorian Mehrdad Nadjmabadi,

“[T]he strange thing about it [the photograph] is that women and men are grouped together to pose for a photo. There are many photos showing women and men together in religious ceremonies as medium or long shots, but this one is quite different. The presence of a foreigner among the people is an indication of a private place, taken at Haji Amin-o-Zarb’s home following the constitution events ca 1906–7.”⁶⁷

Also noteworthy is Sevruguin’s signature embossment on the photograph, which is in Latin letters, not Cyrillic, although in earlier photographs he signed his name in Cyrillic.⁶⁸ Taken together, photographing constitutionalists, signing his name in Latin letters instead of Cyrillic, and eliminating “Russian photographer” from his photographic imprint all point to a shift in consciousness and political sympathies.



— 6: Antoin Sevruguin, Post-constitutional celebration at the house of Hajj Mohammad Hosayn Amin al-Zarb (?), c. 1906–07, private collection of Mehrdad Nadjmabadi, Tehran.

Even though Sevruguin is often framed as an adept businessman, agile and cunning,⁶⁹ it appears that his patriotism for Iran and the Constitutional Revolution meant more to him than capitalizing on and appeasing Mohammad ‘Ali Shah’s court, the shah’s Russian allies, and/or his former friend Colonel Liakhov.

Before the revolution, Sevruguin took several photographs of the infamous punishment of *falak* (bastinado), which involves beating the bottoms of one’s feet (fig. 7). The bastinado was a common contemporaneous motif,⁷⁰ and several such photographs by Sevruguin are extant (which survive out of the thousands that were destroyed). The fact that the bastinado was commented on so frequently in a variety of primary sources speaks to a type of social oppression and humiliation that was symbolic of societal concerns in Qajar Iran, and these photographs are much like Sevruguin’s other images of executions and criminals, reflecting the macabre and the violence that were present in his environment. Indeed, the bastinado of several important persons, including *mojtaheds* (jurists) and powerful merchants, was one of many catalysts of the Constitutional Revolution in 1905.⁷¹ Perhaps this image was just intended as another “scene or type” of Qajar Iran, but Sevruguin depicted a scene that would soon become an epic event and change the course of Iran’s history. It was also his eye that had located these defining characteristics of overarching Qajar society and then photographed them.

Lastly, Sevruguin’s son Andre (Darvish, 1894–1996), with whom Sevruguin was close, was a Dashnakist (a member of the socialist *Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiun* [Armenian Revolutionary Federation, est. 1891–1892], a major revolutionary group in both the Caucasus and Iran), an association that would later cause Darvish political troubles with the Nazis in Austria during World War II (1939–1945).⁷² It is not stated when Darvish became a Dashnakist, because in 1908, he was only fourteen years old. According to the grandson Emanuel, Darvish began making anti-Ottoman statements in 1915, shortly after the Armenian genocide.⁷³ Nonetheless, it was around 1908 that the Dashnaktsutiun took a vote to participate in the Constitutional Revolution. Before then there was fear that the Armeno-Azeri clashes (1905–1907) in Russian-controlled Azerbaijan, which had resulted in thousands of deaths and even more injuries, with Russian officials displaying anti-Armenian sentiments⁷⁴ and even encouraging slaughter, would be repeated in Iranian Azerbaijan. It was believed that the Dashnakists would never be accepted as fellow revolutionaries by Iranian Muslims⁷⁵ since Iranian Muslims working in the Caucasus at that time had supported the Azeris over the Armenians.⁷⁶ But as Armenians and other non-Muslim minorities in Iran were being increasingly suppressed by anti-constitutionalists (and part of the party platform was to collaborate with non-Armenians in struggle),⁷⁷ and the Dashnakist paper *Droshnak* was banned by the Iranian government, the Dashnaktsutiun was compelled to join the constitutionalist struggle and Sattar Khan’s forces in Tabriz, particularly after the Russian military bombed the Majles in 1908.⁷⁸ Yeprem Khan (1868–1912),

another Armenian from Russian-controlled Azerbaijan and a Dashnakist, became one of the Constitutional Revolution's greatest national heroes.

Although Armenian participation in the Constitutional Revolution was diverse, with varying goals and factions fighting on opposing sides (a topic too vast for this article), Iran was referred to as “our fatherland” and “our country” in the Armenian revolutionary, constitutionalist newspapers *Zang* (Bell, Hnchakist) and *Aravot* (Morning, Dashnakist).⁷⁹ It would not have been unusual for an Armenian, even for someone born outside Iran, to consider Iran his/her *vatan* (homeland). Furthermore, political events made Iran and its constitutional movement a third space and a more viable alternative to both the tsarist Russian and Ottoman Empires for Armenian liberation and the basic preservation of life and culture. The Constitutional Revolution became a national movement that united various peoples from all strata of Iranian society, defined by the desire for democracy (although in typical post-revolution fashion, the aftermath was not as unified).

In returning to the question of Sevruguin's evolving identities, it would be noteworthy to nuance how national and ethnic identities were understood in the Cauca-

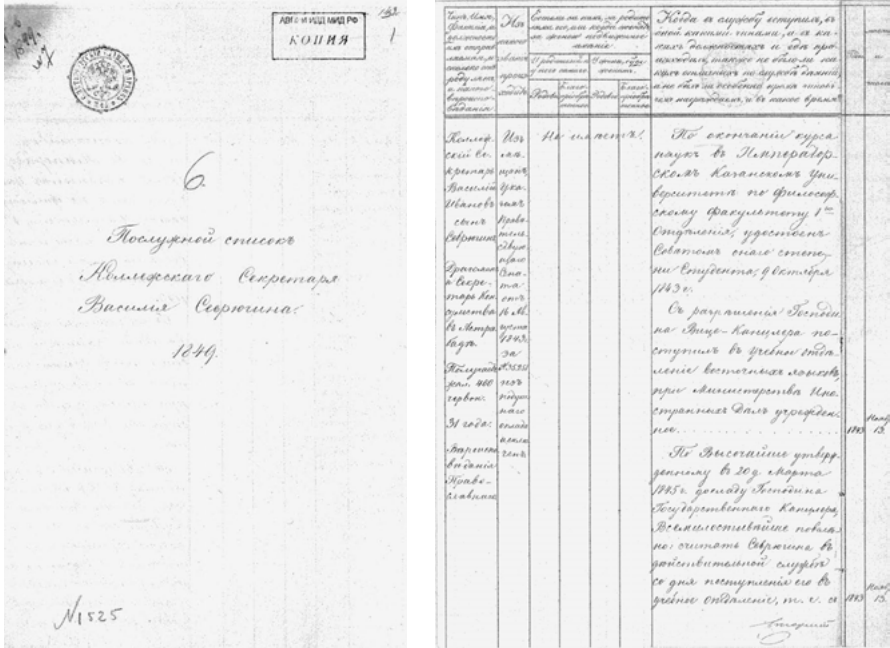


— 7: Antoin Sevruguin, *Bastinado*, c. 1888 (collected by Emil Alpiger in the 1890s), Museum Rietberg, Zurich.

sus and in Iran. At that time, what it meant to be “Russian,” “Armenian,” or “Iranian” stood in contrast to how one understands these labels today. Historian Houri Berberian has written extensively on the national identities of Iranian Armenians, demonstrating how fluid the concept of national belonging was at that time, especially for a people who where and still are dispersed into several geopolitical areas. Scholars, including Berberian, Krasberg, and Emilia Nercissians, have consistently emphasised that being both “Armenian” and “Iranian” were identities not in conflict with each other, and one was not compelled to choose one loyalty over the other.⁸⁰ Unlike in the tsarist and Ottoman Empires, similar intense persecutions and genocides did not arise in Iran toward the Armenian population, at least not with the same severity.

Yet before the late nineteenth century, (Russian) Armenians in general had a positive association with what was thought of as Russian culture with its erudition, literature, and philosophy, as well as the empire’s acceptance and protection of Armenian culture, language, and so on. Berberian writes: “Many had become Russified under the rule of Alexander II (1855–1881); they had adopted Russian names and saw Russian interests as their own.”⁸¹ Historian Richard Hovannisian has claimed that conflict between Armenians and the tsarist government began to arise when it became oppressive toward Armenian intellectuals and revolutionaries who spoke of democracy.⁸² Berberian also states that during the 1880s, enforced Russification, Russian nationalism, and coercive assimilation began to interfere with Armenian communities, such as closing down Armenian schools and prohibiting any printed mention of “Armenian people” or “Armenian nation.”⁸³ Before these harsh policies, which would continue into the twentieth century, advertising oneself as “Russian” even if one were also Armenian was not in conflict and one more case of national fluidity that is difficult for our epoch to understand.

Initially a positive intellectual position, the label “Russian” began to be perceived in a negative light by the early twentieth century, especially in Iran, as a person who was against Iranian sovereignty and democracy. Even though the Ottoman Empire had been the target of revolutionary activities due to its oppressive and lethal policies toward Armenians, such as the Hamidian Massacres (1894–1896), in the Armenian context and especially for the Dashnakists the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, which reinstated the 1876 constitution, was seen as a progressive sign in the right direction, thereby allowing Armenian revolutionaries, including the more skeptical Hnchakists, to focus on Russian aggressions in Iran (and elsewhere).⁸⁴ Articles and editorials in *Droshnak* criticized and harangued Russian imperialism, and one editorial specifically attacked Sevruguin’s former associate Liakhov, implicating him as a tyrant in Iran, as well as equating Tsar Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) with the Ottoman ruler Sultan Abdülhamid II (which was quite an insult): “Again tsarism [...] It interfered [...] in Persia’s bloody sorrow, with its usual cynical barbarity [...] extinguished the emancipatory blaze.”⁸⁵



— 8: “Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849,” Archive for the Russian Empire Foreign Policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. — 9: “Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849,” Archive for the Russian Empire Foreign Policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

In Navab’s *De-Orientalizing Iran* (2011), she lists several events in Sevruguin’s life that she surmises made him turn away from his father’s Russian ties, such as his brother Ivan being sent to a Siberian prison and his family being denied Vasil’s government pension.⁸⁶ This loss of pension may have been due to the fact that Vasil’s records of service for both 1849 and 1859 list him as single with no property. It appears that Vasil did not fill out or sign these documents (figs. 8–9).⁸⁷ But in addition to the Sevruguins being cheated out of their father’s pension and Russian ill-treatment of Armenians at the turn of the twentieth century, which eventually eroded imperial Russia’s national and international reputations, Russia became the antagonist in the events of the Constitutional Revolution. Bohrer comments that the title “akkas-e rus” may have seen foreign and exotic to an Iranian audience; hence, the wording was also used as an advertising ploy.⁸⁸ Yet, during the Constitutional Revolution nothing could have repelled Iranian patronage more. Although the catalysts for the revolution were manifold, many of them arose from poor foreign and economic policies

involving Russia, which led to protests by bazaar merchants and the violent responses toward them by the Tehran governor Ahmad 'Ala' al-Dowleh, including the bastinado of several leading merchants. So in addition to Sevruguin's constitutionalist sympathies and his clear patriotism for the country of Iran, a change in the photographic imprint was safer at that point and more desirable in Tehran. It was a political act in more ways than one.

Finally, Berberian explains that during this critical moment, the perception of what it meant to be "Armenian" was largely tied to the Armenian Church more than anything else.⁸⁹ This framing is useful in understanding Sevruguin who was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church and remained so, even in the afterlife in his resting place: the Sevruguin family is buried in the Doulab Cemetery in Tehran in the Russian section with their gravestone inscriptions in Russian and bearing Russian Orthodox crosses.⁹⁰ According to Michael Khodarkovsky, to be Russian meant first and foremost belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church.⁹¹ Sevruguin's father was in fact Russian Orthodox,⁹² which was a requirement to be in the civil service since the tsarist system was an intricate triad of tsar, state, and church.⁹³ Considering that a patent of Russian nobility was handed down by Vasil's own father,⁹⁴ Antoin was at least a third-generation Russian Orthodox Christian. Most certainly Sevruguin grew up in an Armenian family, had lived among Armenians, and married an Armenian woman, but his earlier photographic imprint indicates a more prominent affiliation with his religion and the cultural sophistication associated with Russia before the revolution. In comparison, there were other contemporaneous Armenian photographers in Tehran who used Armenian script on their photographic imprints, such as A. Michon Agaiaantz and Osip Iosiphianz,⁹⁵ but this was a choice Sevruguin did not make. However, there were also photographers whose imprints communicated in Russian, such as Ermakov's and later Roussie Khan's, and even of Iranian photographers, such as Mirza 'Ali-Asghar in Mashhad;⁹⁶ but except for the Cyrillic names of the cities in which Sevruguin won medals at international expositions—Brussels and Paris—the new imprint is in Persian and French only. In fact, on the older imprint, which displays "'akkas-e rus," there is no Cyrillic present—again, only French and Persian.

In this way, Sevruguin's transformation reflects not only a modern consciousness of opting for a national identity over a religious one but also as an allegory for the country of Iran during the Constitutional Revolution. As the Georgian socialist Tria (Vlass Mgzeldze) proclaimed, "The Persian revolution was a miracle; nations that waged war with one another for centuries united together in the name of freedom against the common enemy. Persians, Armenians, Georgians and Jews banded together under the same banner of revolt,"⁹⁷ and despite the clashes between Armenians and Azeris in the Russian Empire, they actually allied in Iran during the revolution. The Tobacco Protest was a dress rehearsal for the Constitutional Revolution and a turning point in Iranian national consciousness as "the first national mass

movement directed against both state and foreign domination”⁹⁸ when a concession gave Britain complete control over Iran’s tobacco industry. This understanding and expansion of national identity propelled and culminated during the Constitutional Revolution, compounded by the Russian Revolution of 1905, conflict in the Caucasus, and the tension between Qajar Iran, Imperial Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. Sevruguin’s position, then, is a mirror for the region’s transitions, changes, and transformations in terms of nation and identity.

Historically, this information on Sevruguin’s biography is important in contextualizing one of Iran’s greatest photographers but not just in terms of the “facts.” The way one writes about Sevruguin and situates him, impacts the framing of understanding his contributions to (Iranian) photohistory. Yet why is it important for scholars to reconsider Sevruguin’s subjectivity as an Iranian or not in the discourses of Qajar photography besides these biographical inaccuracies that are perpetuated? Until the 1970s, the history of photography was and still is Eurocentric, with North America as a prominent inclusion. In its inception photohistory positions white photographers as the pioneers of photography teaching photographers of color in other countries. With the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978, however, scholars, such as Malek Alloula and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, have sought to illustrate the ways in which colonial photographers framed and re-presented their camera’s subjects that justified colonial exploits by showing populations in the Middle East and East Asia as feminized, uncivilized, and in need of Europe’s domination.⁹⁹ Scholars looked to how these photographs had become instruments in perpetuating ideologies of Orientalism and empire in the metropolises, as well as worldwide. This perspective, although interesting and helpful, still highlighted and privileged a Eurocentric point of view. Scholars could only go so far in understanding the world outside Europe through colonial photography. To bypass the European gaze, a new search commenced for non-European indigenous ones.

This search to locate photographers who were not European or of European descent was a way to give the viewer an alternative perspective through the lens that was not, perhaps, as ideologically-based in Orientalism as their European counterparts, and to identify and to find photographs by anonymous photographers. What was “discovered” by European and American academics in their self-absorption is that many countries had already had an indigenous tradition of photography that percolated very quickly after photography’s official announcement in Paris in 1839, such as in Iran and in Japan. Contributions of colonial photographers were then compared and contrasted with described indigenous photographers, which is still a method practiced. This dichotomy, although needed, can be problematic, because what could be assumed is that one lens is more authentic than the other; each lens will be coded differently; if there is overlap, it will be the onus of the indigenous photographer who becomes a sellout for adopting the ways of the European; and

finally, the European gaze does not absorb the indigenous lens, hence implying that the indigenous lens could adopt European motifs but that the colonial one would not. An important example of this approach is Carmen Pérez González's *Local Portraiture* (2012), in which she argues that since Iranians read Persian from right to left, as opposed to those who read European languages, Qajar-era photographs are usually arranged from right to left; hence, she states that Qajar photographs are the laterally-reversed or mirror images of European photographs.¹⁰⁰ For instance, she demonstrates that European photographers pose their subjects standing right of the chair, and Iranian photographers pose their subjects left; Europeans pose their children on the right arm, Iranians hold their children on the left; and Europeans arrange figures from short to tall whereas Iranians arrange from tall to short.¹⁰¹ These types of analyses, then, would assist in determining unidentified Iranian photographers and their photographs from European ones.

Iranian photographers and viewers may have composed and read images differently in a semiotic way from right to left, as Chahryar Adle had already argued in 1980,¹⁰² but there are many exceptions to these findings in both Iranian and European photographs. Moreover, it is possible that the orientation of the photograph could give initial indications of a photographer's identity, but then more information would be needed to make a final assessment, because if one is seeking indigenous lenses of Iran, then what are the limits of whom is considered "an indigenous lens" or contributes to one? A person who is born in Iran, lives most of the years of his or her life in Iran, and knows Persian fluently (all of which apply to Sevruguin)? For example, Armenian, Georgian, and Cyrillic scripts are all written from left to right, meaning that not only Europeans may be more compelled to organize their photographs in specific ways but also persons from the Caucasus or Armenians and Georgians already living in Iran, including Sevruguin.

Repositioning Sevruguin within the political contexts mentioned in this chapter would also illuminate the current debate about some of the attributions of Sevruguin's photographs. For example, in relation to Sevruguin's images of religious shrines, such as of the Imam 'Ali Shrine in Najaf, Tahmasbpour argues that it would have been difficult for a non-Muslim to have had close enough access to photograph them (fig. 10).¹⁰³ Indeed, Krasberg mentions that Sevruguin hid his camera while photographing Shi'i religious events of the 'Ashura' (the day of mourning for Imam Hosain), because there may have been dire consequences if exposed.¹⁰⁴ After looking at several historical photographs of Najaf, I would even be hesitant to label this particular photograph as the shrine of Najaf, but aside from this, I also think it would have been extremely difficult to impossible for Sevruguin as an Armenian with tsarist Russian connections to even enter Ottoman-controlled Najaf, and to my knowledge, there is no record of Sevruguin traveling to Iraq. But then how did Sevruguin obtain these photographs and sell them as his own if they were not? According to



— 10: Pilgrims at the Shrine of Najaf in Iraq, 1900, supposed photograph by Antoin Sevruguin, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Tahmasbpour, he may have paid for or collected unwanted negatives from the royal ‘*akkaskhaneh*. Considering the lack of copyright law, it would not have been unethical for Sevruguin to sell photographs that were not his, and other studios in Tehran engaged in similar practises. It seems that this was a common nineteenth-century practice in general.¹⁰⁵ So, if Sevruguin were collecting negatives from the Qajar court that had been produced by the ‘*akkasbashis* already there or by the king himself, then would not those images also be considered “indigenous,” taken by Iranian photographers? But in addition to this, Ahmad Chaychi indicated that when Ermakov left Iran, the negatives of his photographs that had remained within the ‘*akkaskhaneh* of Dar al-Fonun were divided between ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar and Sevruguin and then passed off as their own images.¹⁰⁶ So in this case, who really was the local Iranian photographer engaged in creating and disseminating a new photographic language, visuality, and practice?

Returning to Sevruguin’s photographic imprints, I do not know exactly why he removed the title “Russian photographer” during the early twentieth century, but my guess is that he began to see Iran as that third space and his home, choosing Iran

amid rising tensions in the Caucasus and embracing the nationalist sentiments of the Constitutional Revolution. From the evidence presented, I understand that Sevruguin saw himself as an “Iranian” and a patriot. Although he advertised himself as a “Russian photographer” before the Constitutional Revolution, as his parents were Armenians from Russian-controlled areas of the Caucasus, and he was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, I argue that Sevruguin interpreted no conflict in changing positions or claiming more than one nationality, considering how porous national identities were at that time. Indeed, this chapter is more about us and our historical approaches than about Sevruguin himself in a contemporary world obsessed with borders, states, and nationalisms. To me, he was an indigenous lens in Iranian photography and practice and a complicated man in a complicated world. Although the Tobacco Protest is usually cited as the beginning of when subjects living under Qajar rule began to see themselves as “Iranian,” it was the Constitutional Revolution that made those living in Iran “Iranian,” including Sevruguin, despite the many differences within the population. He and his family were constitutionalists and saw themselves as “Iranian” versus associating with the Russian armed forces allied with Mohammad ‘Ali Shah. Although born and raised in Iran, which should be enough to deem Sevruguin as “Iranian,” I believe that both the Armenian persecutions in the Caucasus and the Constitutional Revolution made him choose a side, the “Iranian” one, and he never changed back.

NOTES

- 1 Much gratitude goes to Houri Berberian, Ahmad Chaychi, Ulrike Krasberg, Axel Langer, Mehrdad Nadjmabadi, Irina Popova, Lana Ravandi-Fadai, Markus Ritter, Houman Sarshar, Elmar Seibel, Saltanat Shoshanova, Arman Stepanian, Farhad Tamadon, and the staff at ‘Akskhaneh-ye Shahr and the Image Center of Golestan Palace.
- 2 Yahya Zoka’ dated the newer imprint around 1902, and Frederick N. Bohrer has suggested around 1905; however, my archival research in the Archive of Modern Conflict in London in 2014 has shown that both imprints were used, at least, in 1900, even though the second imprint is newer due to the inclusion of “Anton Khan”—an honorific title given to him around 1900 by the king Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1896–1907). See Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, 141; and Bohrer, “Looking,” 35.
- 3 Rosaldo, “Cultural Citizenship,” 402.
- 4 For example, Vuurman/Martens, *Perzië en Hotz*, 31; Bohrer, “Looking,” 36; Sheikh “Sevruguin,” 5; Roodenburg, *Bril*, 106; Vuurman, “Sevruguin,” 171; David, “Interview,” 26; Kiaras, “Naqqashi,” 17; Pérez González, *Local Portraiture* 166, 178, 185; and Wakita, *Staging Desires*, 117.
- 5 *Tehran Times* 2014.
- 6 Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, 136.
- 7 This is the common translation of *parvardeh-ye Iran* although it is not precise.

- 8 Sheikh, "Sevruguin," 13 n. 11.
- 9 Sevrugian, "Nameh-ha," 5.
- 10 See Stein, "Early photography," and Stein, "Traditions."
- 11 Vasil Sevruguin was 31 years old in 1849 according to his "Record of service" from the Russian Foreign Ministry. See "Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849." I greatly appreciate the efforts of the head archivist Irina Popova of the Archive of the Russian Empire Foreign Policy for finding the document, and I am also grateful for the translation of the Russian by my promising student Saltanat Shoshanova.
- 12 Ulrike Krasberg says that Vasil was "an Armenian with a Russian passport." Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 13.
- 13 Sevrugian, "Namheh-ha," 5.
- 14 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 49 n. 7.
- 15 "Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849."
- 16 Melikian, "Opening."
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren*, 21–22.
- 19 Bohrer, "Looking," 40.
- 20 Melikian, "Opening."
- 21 Vasil was still alive on January 31, 1859, according to the "Record of service of Dragoon and Consulate Secretary in Astrabad [Gorgan]: Collegiate secretary Sevruguin, 1859."
- 22 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 23.
- 23 Bournoutian, *Journal*, 1.
- 24 Nercissians, "Iranian Armenian," 197; Berberian, *Armenians*, 36.
- 25 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 23.
- 26 See Vuurman, "Sevruguin," 168–169; and Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 41.
- 27 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 22. Emanuel Sevrugian writes, "drei seiner Schwestern [three of his sisters]," implying that Antoin had more than three sisters who are unidentified. Sevrugian, "Antoine-Khan;" "Sevrugian: Bilder des Orients in Fotografie und Malerei 1880–1980."
- 28 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 23.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 31.
- 31 Sevrugian, "Antoine-Khan."
- 32 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 23. For the language curriculum of the Nersisyan School, see Khachaturian, *Nationhood*, 50.
- 33 Sevrugian, "Nameh-ha," 7.
- 34 Elliot, *Russische Photographie*, 249.
- 35 Szymon Bojko states that the opening date of Ermakov's studio falls between 1882–3, but this would be too late for Sevruguin, as he was already in Tabriz by 1878 (Bojko, "Old Tiflis," 6). It is possible, then, that Sevruguin could have worked with Ermakov as a colleague prior to the opening of Ermakov's studio.
- 36 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 24; see also Behdad, "Sevruguin," 89.
- 37 Galerie Gmurzynska, *Jermakow*, 47. Thanks are due to Lana Ravandi-Fadai for confirming the Russian translation.
- 38 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 59.
- 39 Sheikh, "Sevruguin," 13 n. 16.

- 40 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 141.
- 41 Galerie Gmurzynska, *Jermakow*, 47.
- 42 Hovannisian, "Russian Armenia," 35–36.
- 43 Sheikh, "Sevruguin," 3; Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 35.
- 44 Sheikh, "Sevruguin," 5. This date might be slightly earlier. The general narrative is that Sevruguin met an Austrian physician at Naser al-Din Shah's court who recommended that he go to Vienna. The assumption is that this physician was Jakob Eduard Polak (1818–1891). Yet Polak left Iran in 1860, returning to Tehran in 1882 when he met with Naser al-Din Shah. However, Emanuel says that his grandfather travelled to Vienna at Polak's suggestion and stayed there for some time. With that said, Zoka' claims that Sevruguin moved to Tehran permanently in the 1890s, shortly before the arrival of Mozaffar al-Din Shah. See Sevrugian, "Nameh-ha," 7; Werner, "Polak;" and Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi* 136.
- 45 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 33.
- 46 Bohrer, "Sevruguin," 36
- 47 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 43.
- 48 Sevrugian, "Nameh-ha," 5.
- 49 Tahmasbpour, conversation with the author in 2014.
- 50 Vuurman, "Sevruguin," 169.
- 51 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 27.
- 52 "Sevrugian – Bilder des Orients in Fotografie und Malerei 1880–1980."
- 53 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 23.
- 54 Ibid.; Sevrugian, "Nameh-ha," 5.
- 55 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 27.
- 56 Sheikh, "Portfolio," 56; Behdad, "Sevruguin," 80; Ballerini, "Passages," 99; Sheikh, "Sevruguin," 5; Behdad, "Contract Vision," 179.
- 57 The numbers vary on how many slides Reza Shah confiscated and then destroyed or returned. See Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 29; and Sevrugian, "Nameh-ha," 5.
- 58 Gheissari/Nasr, *Democracy*, 39.
- 59 Navab, "Orientalist," 139.
- 60 Stepanian, "Barrasi," 25.
- 61 Naficy, *Social History*, I, 29.
- 62 See Smithsonian repository numbers FSA A.4 2.12.GN.23.13, FSA A.4 2.12.GN.24.02, and FSA A.4 2.12.GN.52.08
- 63 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 140. For this reason, and due to Sevruguin's house and studio being bombed on exactly June 24, 1908, while the Sevruguins were taking *bast*, I do not think it was Sevruguin who took the photograph of the prisoners at Bagh-e Shah on June 24, 1908, as photographer Azadeh Akhlaghi has suggested in her 2012 series "By an Eye-Witness."
- 64 Although the Smithsonian offers such a wide-ranging date for this photograph, the clothing of the men around the building very much appear to be from the late Qajar-early Pahlavi era, so closer to 1928 when Joseph Upton purchased the photographs from Sevruguin.
- 65 Nadjmabadi, email to author in 2014. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Nadjmabadi for allowing me to see his private collection, granting copyright permission, and answering all my questions.
- 66 Bayat, *First Revolution*, 49; Katouzian, *State and Society*, 35, 308.

- 67 Stepanian provides a similar story about the gathering at Amin al-Zarb's residence, but only this time the photographer in the narrative is 'Abdollah Mirza Qajar (1850–1912). See Stepanian, "Barrasi," 37.
- 68 Vuurman/Martens, "Early photography in Iran," 23.
- 69 David, "Interview," 26.
- 70 For example, see Cutler/Yaggy, *Panorama*, 533–534; Wilson, *Life and Customs*, 66, 86, 169, 184, 186; and Adams, *Persia*, 19, 117–122.
- 71 Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 112; and Kasravi, *History*, I, 65, 71.
- 72 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 47.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 74 Villari, *Fire and Sword*, 270.
- 75 Berberian, *Armenians*, 83, 96.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 82–83.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 27, 84.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 94, 96.
- 79 Berberian, "Traversing," 289
- 80 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 29; Nercissians, "Iranian Armenian," 187.
- 81 Berberian, "Traversing," 24.
- 82 Hovannisian, "Russian Armenia," 31–32.
- 83 Berberian, "Traversing," 23–24.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 70–71.
- 85 "Tiezerakan reaksan yev sotsializme [Universal reaction and socialism]," *Droshak*, no. 6 (June 1908), quoted in Berberian, "Traversing," 75, 77. Comparing Nicholas II to Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) appears even before the revolution.
- 86 Navab, "Orientalist," 74–76. Ivan's imprisonment was due to subversive political activities. His crime is unknown but intriguing nonetheless.
- 87 "Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849"; and "Record of service of Dragoman and Consulate Secretary in Astrabad [Gorgan]: Collegiate secretary Sevruguin 1859."
- 88 Bohrer, "Looking," 36.
- 89 Berberian, "Traversing," 10.
- 90 Thanks to Lana Ravandi-Fadai for her pictures of the Sevruguin family graves, as well as their Russian translations. Thank you to Houri Berberian for looking at the photographs as well. Unfortunately, Antoin's grave was damaged, illegible, and under renovation.
- 91 Khodarkovsky, "Savages," 17; Klier, "State Policies," 93.
- 92 "Record of service of collegiate secretary Vassily Sevruguin 1849."
- 93 Khodarkovsky, "Savages," 18; Geraci/Khodarkovsky, *Religion and Empire*, 4.
- 94 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 49 n. 7.
- 95 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 205, 222.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 59, 147, 281.
- 97 Tria 1911, 332.
- 98 Foran, *Resistance*, 162.
- 99 See Alloula, *Colonial Harem*; and Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*.
- 100 Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 21.
- 101 *Ibid.*, 23–4; 41–67.
- 102 Adle, *Écriture*, 14.
- 103 Tahmasbpour, conversation with the author 2014.

- 104 Krasberg, "Artists of the Sevrugian family," 37.
 105 See Wakita, *Staging Desires*, 20, 57; and de Herder, "Ermakov," 57.
 106 Chaychi, email to author in 2014.

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- 1–2: Kimia Foundation, New York City.
 3: Photograph courtesy of Lana Ravandi-Fadai.
 4: Kimia Foundation, New York City.
 5: published in Zoka 1997, 136
 6: Private collection of Mehrdad Nadjmabadi, Tehran.
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 8: Archive for the Russian Empire Foreign Policy fond 159, inventory 464, item 2985, page 1, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.
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WENDY M. K. SHAW

THE OTTOMAN IN OTTOMAN PHOTOGRAPHY:
PRODUCING IDENTITY THROUGH ITS NEGATION

Although photography—particularly that produced outside a normative western European framework—is often discussed through national boundaries, the question of how a so-called mechanical art corresponds with purported shifts in identity designated by a nation state is rarely addressed. Does such an implicit geography of photography correspond to any clearly visible differences in photographic practices? While contemporary photographic discourses recognize the mediation of the individual as a factor in the production of the apparent mechanical image of photography, it has rarely questioned the logic of the coincidence between collective photographic practice and geography.¹ The question is a bit like that of the chicken and the egg: does the nation come first to be discovered through an aesthetic artistic practice, such as photography, or does the practice come first, and in its emergence come to define the nation after the fact? Far from the initial idea of the photograph as a mechanical eye—much debunked and yet latent in our willingness to believe the documentary photograph—the “eye” of the individual photographer influences every aspect of the image through numerous conscious, unconscious, and serendipitous choices made between clicking the shutter and then producing the image in viewable form. Yet to assert a photography as representative of a collective identity marked by the boundaries of a state, as in the term “Ottoman photography,” one needs to know how this individual photographic act becomes part of a broader cultural practice bounded by national geography, so that one could speak of something such as “Ottoman” photography as distinct from that of “French” photography or “New Guinean” photography—not simply through the signifiers in the images, which might be equally photographed by visitors as well as by locals, but also through some uniquely national practice of selection or signification. Is there such a uniquely Ottoman practice of signification that would enable one to speak of an Ottoman photography beyond a mere chronology of photography in the empire? Or if we put the chicken before the egg, what can the practices of photography as they developed in the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923) tell us about a collective, proto-national Ottoman identity? Rather than looking to overtly national practices of Ottoman photography patronized by the



— 1: Author's Mother's Maternal Grandfather, n. d., photography, Author's collection. The sartorial practices of this late nineteenth century Ottoman gentleman of the Black Sea region had not been mediated by the modernity, yet he is contemporaneous with other visual practices associated with modernity.

state, most famously by Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), which generally constitute the backbone of studies of Ottoman photography, this paper begins to consider these questions through the examination of how private photography functioned in the production of late Ottoman identity among its citizens.²

Two photographs show my maternal great-grandfathers sometime in the late nineteenth century (figs. 1–2). The first one was Ali of the Dervishzade family of Rize, which had resisted Ottoman taxation in the seventeenth century and engaged in trade with tsarist Russia. His wife was pregnant eighteen times, and when one of the children, my great-grandmother Meryem, survived, he would show his love by giving her a fez full of gold coins to play with. The family was, in other words, very wealthy. But in 1917, fearing invasion from the Russians, the family fled in a boat and packed their rubles in cheese tins for the journey. By the time they arrived in Istanbul with my newborn grandmother, the paper money they had brought with them was worthless. The other photograph (fig. 2) shows my grandfather's grandfather—I think the



— 2: Author's Mother's Paternal Grandfather and Unidentified Man. The image depicts two late nineteenth century gentlemen as modern subjects. While the studio environment and clothing indicates a trans-national, European-inflected style, the fez worn by both men emphasizes their Ottoman identity.

one standing—who was one of 13 sons (by multiple wives) of Hüseyin Haki. Although his grandson (my great-grandfather) was a simple state bureaucrat, Hüseyin Haki had gained fame as an administrator in Crete and then under the Khedivate of Egypt (1867–1914), and later he became the founder of the *Şirket-i Hayriye* ferryboat company, the only modern transportation establishment founded by an Ottoman citizen rather than through concessions to European powers. Thus both photographs show upper-class Ottoman gentlemen, one of whom inherited a legacy of conflict with the state, and one of whom was very much part of its modernization.

The photographs were taken at a historical moment when, throughout the world, people were learning how to use increasingly inexpensive photographic technologies in various forms whether for personal memorialization, identification, or representation—functions one still expects from the photograph. In this sense, regardless of the varying photographic techniques used in the production of photographs, reflected in their very different appearances, these images suggest increasingly international

functions of portrait photography in the late nineteenth century. These photographs (the photographers are no longer known) were produced in the Ottoman Empire and represent Ottoman citizens. Thus as much as they reflect international practices, they are also undeniably Ottoman. Beyond the identity of the sitters (and very likely the photographers themselves, about whom I have no information), what makes such photographs Ottoman? What is the place of such private family photographs within a broader sphere of Ottoman photography? Can one place a personal discourse of “this is said to be my great-grandfather” within a meaningful historical narrative?

Photography in the Ottoman Empire emerged through complex processes of transfer, involving individuals, technologies, and aesthetic practices. The first wave of photography in the Ottoman Empire was not so much “Ottoman” as much as the photographic representation of the Ottoman Empire largely for European audiences by European photographers traveling to historical sites throughout the empire. Such visual documentation of the empire had been intimately linked with European colonialism in the Middle East even before the birth of photography in the 1830s. From the moment of the public announcement of photography in France in 1839, the director of the Paris Observatory and a member of the Chamber of Deputies, François Arago (1786–1853), associated photography with French colonial might. He did so by depicting photography as a colonial tool, comparing the improved power of photographic reproduction against that of the *Description de l’Egypte* (1809–1829), an encyclopedia sponsored by Napoleon (r. 1804–1815), which famously incorporates images as part of the drive to imperial empire through the collection of information. For him, photography functioned as a tool of historical preservation that served to “prove” that Egypt would be better protected by the French, whom he understood as the inheritors of its legacies of antiquity, rather than by the Arabs who had inhabited it for centuries:

“Everyone will imagine the extraordinary advantages which could have been derived from so exact and rapid a means of reproduction during the expedition to Egypt; everybody will realize that had we had photography in 1798 we would possess today faithful pictorial records of that which the learned world is forever deprived of by the greed of the Arabs and the vandalism of certain travelers. To copy the millions of hieroglyphics which cover even the exterior of the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak, and others would require decades of time and legions of draughtsman.”³

The Ottoman Empire hence became one of the earliest subjects of travel photography when the French painter Horace Vernet (1789–1863) and his nephew Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet (1806–1893) began to photograph Egypt only three months after Daguerre’s process was announced. Photographer Joseph Philibert Girault de Prangey (1804–1892)

also documented the region as early as 1842–1844, publishing his work in *Monuments arabes d’Egypte, de Syrie, et d’Asie Mineure* in 1846. Similarly, photographer Maxime du Camp (1822–1894) accompanied writer Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) on his trip to Egypt in 1849–1850. The growth of photographic technology soon rendered it part of a broader, international practice. Thus during his trips in 1856–1860, the English photographer Francis Frith (1822–1898) gained renown for similar photographic documentation of the Middle East, later disseminated as postcards.

The limitations of a long exposure time in early photography, the fragility of the daguerreotype, and the interest of these photographers and their audiences in antiquity reduced the amount of contemporaneous life depicted in photographs of this era.⁴ Instead, curiosity about a European-constructed “Orient” was often satisfied through the popular genre of Orientalist painting, or studio photography as soon as somewhat quicker exposure times were possible by the 1850s. Both Orientalist painting and studio photography wove realistic details that were enabled by the camera into fantastic scenarios. On one hand, Orientalist painting adapted the visual realism afforded by the camera, applied in academic painting of the late nineteenth century to exotic contexts. In doing so, it produced a hyperreal “Orient,” in which ethnographic verisimilitude offered visual verification of an Orientalist imagination.⁵ On the other hand, studio photography of people in exotic garb and scenography produced an authentic effect in a controlled space, in which subjects could remain still long enough to be photographed. Thus while early photography proliferated on the Ottoman stage, it was not understood as representing contemporary Ottoman space so much as presenting antique and biblical sites that happened to be in the empire. Conversely, the empire as an exotic entity of the present was still largely represented through a mode of painting, which erased its modernization. In a sense, such photography enhanced the function of an ideological “Orient” as a fiction for imperial Europe: the photograph could only document an absent past perceived as “real” whereas the present required the artistic mediation of pen and brush.

The representational potential of photography began to change with reduced costs in the 1850s, enabling more photographers to work independently. Likewise, improved technologies facilitated the representation of casual and private subjects. This expansion of photographic practices also led an increasing number of European photographers to travel to and to settle in the Middle East, including Istanbul, as well as provincial capitals of the empire. Photography became an integral part of the colonial project, verifying the foreignness of the colonial Other while simultaneously placing it within the confines of imperial knowledge and surveillance.⁶ For example, consider Francis Frith’s *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* of 1858–1859 (fig. 3). The photograph shows a distant vista of Jerusalem taken from a site of Biblical significance, the Mount of Olives, inhabited by two figures in white robes under darker robes. On one hand, the two figures in front could be local people. On the other hand,



— 3: Francis Frith, Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, 1858–1859, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Early photographs taken by Europeans visiting the Ottoman Empire often emphasized subjects of interest to Europeans, such as antiquity and the Bible, creating a visual lexicon of the empire distinct from indigenous interests.

the Biblical reference in the image title suggests that the scenography is Biblical itself, juxtaposing a contemporary landscape with an imaginary production of ancient times. Indeed, the inclusion of local figures, whether as picturesque elements or as measures of monuments, was a common trope within such early photography. This photographic production was not normally taken by Ottoman photographers and therefore not “Ottoman photography.” Yet such photography of the Ottoman Empire by European photographers established a sort of lexicon of genres that informed photography as it developed over time in the empire.

Several years after photography had first entered the empire through traveling foreign photographers, James Robertson (1813–1888), who was hired by the Imperial Mint in 1841, established himself as a photographer in the Pera district of Istanbul in 1853; the same year he published an album of images of the city entitled *Photographic Views of Constantinople*. Soon after, Ottoman photographers, such as Basile Kargopoulo (1826–1886), Pascal Sébah (1823–1886), and the Abdullah Frères, produced photographs that closely resembled formats created through European photography and

reflecting European interests in representations of the “Orient.” Thus the panoramic view of the city, popularized through the “tremendous Panorama of Constantinople,” a gigantic canvas view of the city displayed in a rotunda with viewers at the center, was one of the first urban cityscapes made available through the new panoramic technology in London 1801–1802, becoming a mainstay of late nineteenth-century representations of the city.⁷ Likewise, images of tombs transformed a staged genre into one that, although more apparently candid, was nonetheless the continuation of a romanticization of picturesque timelessness exemplified in the Western imagination by the disorderly, turbaned tombstones of the cemeteries of Istanbul. Similarly, lively groups in imaginative studio settings and more somber photographs of workers (in plainer studio settings), which offered apparent ethnographic information about the city and its inhabitants, proliferated in Ottoman studios. While these photographs were certainly made by Ottoman photographers within the empire and of Ottoman subjects, their underlying themes reproduced images of Ottomans, which verified preexisting European tropes of the “Orient.”⁸ While these are certainly “Ottoman” photographs in the sense of the representational tropes they used and the audiences they may have at least partly addressed, they are not “Ottoman photography” in the sense of providing insight into something Ottoman beyond the expectations of a European “Orient” already structured by generations of European travelers. In other words, rather than expressing a contemporary internal expression of modern Ottoman identity under production in the late nineteenth century, they reflected already existing tropes of the “Oriental” Ottoman already coded into the repertoires of visual representation. What would become Ottoman photography was not a means of showing Ottomans in alterity, which was both constructed by and attractive to European gazes; rather, Ottoman photography emerged in an attempt to represent the empire and its subjects as a self-reflexive representation—not so much of being Ottoman but of (also) being modern.⁹

An example of this transition from Ottoman photographers utilizing a European aesthetic to one that is by Ottomans and for Ottomans which possibly expressed a modern Self can be seen in a comparison of photographs from 1873 and those produced under Abdülhamid between 1891 and 1893. While produced through state funding and by Ottoman photographers as a visual classification of the diversity within the empire and a reassertion of the wide range of identities subsumed within the empire, the photographs produced by Sébah and Joaillier for *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873* displayed at the International Exposition in Vienna adhere to the existing norms of ethnographic photography, such as the posed setting in a conscientious variety of clothing enacted by repeated groups of models, who were not of the ethnicities represented by the costumes, thus replicating a European classificatory system commonly used in colonial contexts to represent diverse ethnicities to a largely European audience (fig. 4). These self-conscious and diverse representations



— 4: Pascale Sébah, Illustration of Women's Costumes from Damascus. Such photographs, created for the Vienna World's Fair of 1873, constructed a visual lexicon of diverse identities subsumed within the empire. These photographs restaged an Ottoman Empire historically organized through religious distinctions as a modern, European-style empire organized through control over diverse ethnicities.

of Self for external consumption suggest an Ottoman photographic practice that could be executed by any agent aiming to represent the empire. As such, they do not represent an autochthonous Ottoman photographic practice so much as an application of a colonial one within Ottoman territories. Conversely, photographs executed by many Ottoman photographers, such as those representing pairings of students at the multitude of modern schools established throughout the empire during the reign of Abdülhamid and produced for the extensive albums that were compiled (1880–1893), suggest a transformation of the ethnographic genre into a representation of modernity.¹⁰ While the state photographic project sponsored for Abdülhamid was certainly developed in part for foreign audiences, as evidenced by the preparation of elaborate albums as gifts to the United States and Great Britain in 1893, their translation of the ethnographic alterity representing the empire into strictly a modernist vocabulary represents a shift in self-representation. The images of anonymous students recall an ethnographic format but replace the diversity of ethnography with the image of modern imperial identity disseminated throughout the empire as exemplified by the uniform representations of schools producing modern citizens within—even when the subjects in question were wearing so-called tribal dress—itself a means of reifying the identity of regional groups as timeless and uniform (figs. 5–6). If, as Ahmet Ersoy claims, *Les costumes populaires* represented an Ottoman appropriation of European scientific practices as an indication of Ottoman modernization, then the similarly staged photographic emphasis on modernity in the Abdülhamid albums produced twenty years later introduced a visual vocabulary reflecting the further development of Ottoman modernization.¹¹

Likewise, whereas foreign travelers to the empire had filled albums with representations of historical sites, the Abdülhamid II Collection of Albums gave even more importance to the photographic documentation of Ottoman modernity through new buildings, the institutions of reform they represented, and the peoples who inhabited new educational, medical, and even penal institutions. Like the photographs in *Les costumes populaires* when sent as gifts to England and to the United States, select albums in this extensive archive served to represent the Ottoman Empire abroad. In contrast, however, they did not do so through already extant, Orientalizing tropes of Ottoman or Oriental-ness but through a new representation of what being Ottoman was supposed to entail. In this new visual vocabulary being Ottoman was defined less through exoticism than through a universalism intended to show it as participating in a supposed global visual culture coded through European norms.

Such rhetoric of modernization, going beyond the imperial into everyday studio photography, emerges in Hamdi Pashazade M. Khalid's *Detailed account of the practice and theory of photography* of 1891. Although several photographic manuals had been published as early as 1841, Khalid purports to offer the first manual of its kind in the empire, presumably of its ambitions beyond the function of a technical manual.¹² The



— 5: Students at the Military Medical School, c. 1891, Library of Congress collections, Washington D.C. Extensive photographs of students and the numerous modern institutions of the late Ottoman Empire underscored the modernist control of the state over the entire empire through centralized systems of education, medicine, industry, as well as visual technologies through which to record and catalogue them.

work begins by establishing the context of the work as “part of the noble acquisition of science and knowledge and the building of contemporary sciences” characterizing the reign of Abdülhamid. Particularly after the spread of *usul-i cedid* (the new educational system) throughout the territories, he explains, “[T]he number of people excited and curious about the art of photography increases by the day.” While the author recognizes that some of the pictures such amateurs produce are “many times



— 6: Students at the Tribal (Ashiret) School, c. 1891, Library of Congress collections, Washington D.C. Part of Ottoman modernization included projects of mainstreaming, “civilizing” and Ottomanizing diverse ethnicities, particularly nomads who had a long history of resistance to the centralized state. Such photographs indicate control over this diversity.

more pleasant than those made in photographic studios,” he nonetheless laments that an absence of technical knowhow limits the quality and therefore the interest of much of his era’s photography. He proposes that if only patrons knew that at a photography studio, a photograph must pass through the hands of four or five people before it reaches its final state, then artists would not be so disheartened. “For example,” he explains, “if an individual trying to retouch a photograph is unable to

succeed at retouching a photograph to the same extent as someone employed at a photographic studio, should he be criticized?" He thus proposes that his technical manual, which begins with a lexicon of words particularly pertaining to the "wisdom of printing and chemistry on which photography is based" not yet translated into Ottoman, was designed to provide instruction to amateurs who would want to make photographs equivalent in quality to those made in Europe.

Khalid's book thus provides a glimpse not of professional photographic activity at studios largely located in Pera established by foreigners and Ottoman Christians, often patronized by the imperial family and featured in most contemporary studies of photography. Instead, his work documents a growing desire among a wider range of Ottoman citizens, inside and outside the capitol, with modern education, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation, to use photography to represent themselves privately. The need expressed by Khalid for a detailed book in "our own language," as opposed to similar manuals already available in the empire in French to elites, who as part of their education would have learned French, suggests the need for a new photographic practice that would not entail learning through another language but making the technical language into one's own. Thus an Ottoman manual of photography offers a translation that is not simply a linguistic transposition but one of an identity long associated with the photographer as an agent of image production and modernity. Yet it is important to remember that at this time the photographic technologies Khalid discusses required large investments possible only for committed amateurs. Requiring heavy lenses, planned lighting, and an extensive array of chemicals and printing equipment, the studio Khalid describes would entail an immense financial and spatial outlay, which involves not only the production of a photographic space but also the production of an objective subject and a delocalized space suitable for the execution of a modern science.

Khalid begins by describing the construction and organization of a room appropriate for making photographs:

"A person should in any case produce a picture in a studio [...] A place like a room, where all sides are closed, or a place like a garden, where all sides are open, is inappropriate for the production of the picture of people with the lenses that we recommend. Because from the point of view of photography, a person has four sides: right, left, up, and down."

Thus Khalid expresses the idea that photography can have a point of view, and that this point of view regards the human from four objective directions. He thus introduces the concept of photography as a mechanized agent and the person being photographed as an objectified subject—no longer human but consisting of four sides, in which light, and not the individuality of the sitter, comes to represent the human

subject. He goes on to elaborate the mechanical relationship between photography and its object:

“Light should come from two of these sides and not from the two others. As light should come from above not below, a shadow emerges between the brow and eye, the nose and upper lip, the lower lip and chin, and the chin and the neck, which makes the brow appear high, the eye relatively sunken, the nose high, the upper lip recessed, and a groove under the lower lip. Light should come from the right, and as it does not come from the left, that side will remain in shadow. Even if to a certain extent this will serve to modulate the effect of light coming from above, it also emphasizes wrinkles and shows the clothing as increasingly light to dark from right to left, making the arms and head look round and giving greater volume to the body.”

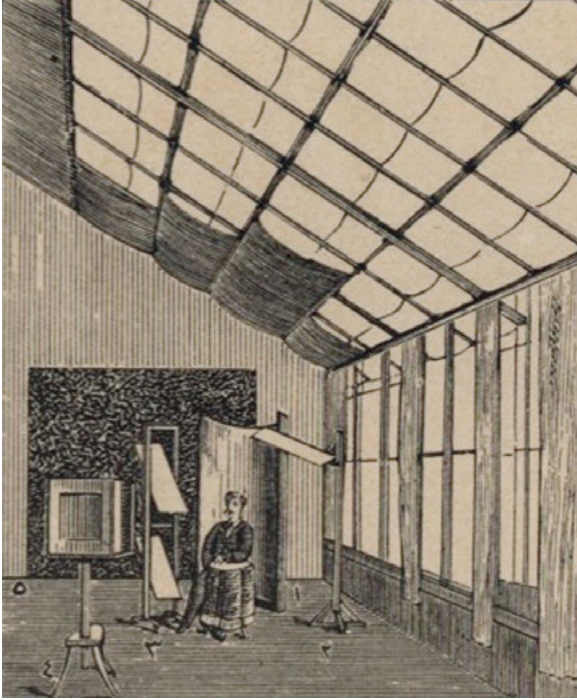
The subject of the photograph as an individual thus disappears, remodeled as form through the relationship between light and the record-making of the camera. Unlike European photography, which drew on tropes of portraiture to emphasize the individual identity of the sitter, here a photographic manual reduces the individuality of the sitter in favor of the technicality of practice, in a manner in accordance with the general concern of technocratic modernization that characterized the era. This might suggest an affiliation with impressionist theories through contact with French discourse.

This simple photographic setup would soon prove insufficient, requiring a fairly extensive and specific construction of a new kind of space uncluttered both from within and from without:

“To remain faithful to this described practice, a well-lit garden can be found. But this must be done in a timely way for an hour later light will no longer be found there. For example, if from across the garden, there were a white wall, then the wall would reflect the sunlight to the location where the photograph was being taken. But an hour later, there would be no light. For this reason, in any case, there is need for a studio.”

The importance of this space is underscored by its representation in the only non-technical image in the book, accompanied by an extensive description (fig. 7):

“There needs to be at least one or two meters between the man and the correct lens on a tripod to produce a photograph the size of a *carte de visite*. If the lens takes five meters to take that picture, a studio six or seven meters in length, as much as three and a half in width, and three in height is sufficient. The roof



— 7: Illustration from M. Khalid, *Detailed account*. This drawing of an ideal photography studio underscores photography as an Ottoman practice by including a subject sartorially coded as anachronistically Ottoman.

should have at least a thirty-six-degree slant and at least a meter and a half of obscured glass. Just as the right side will be all glass, the frames on this side should be openable to renew the air of the studio. The section opposing the glass side should be painted dark blue or ash. The place where the studio is to be built should always be on the top floor. If the studio is on flat ground, any buildings nearer than 50 meters will damage the light. As such a place is difficult to find in a city, a studio must be built on the top floor of a building.”

Khalid then enhances the objectification of the photographic subject by positioning him in the studio according to the cardinal directions rather than in relationship to the photographer:

“No matter how many degrees north the placement of the studio is, the glass part of the studio should always face north, but in places in the southern hemisphere,

the glass part should face south [...] Thus when the person being photographed sits in front of the backdrop, the north is to his right, the south is to his left, the east is to his back, and the west is to his front.”

Identity emerges less from markers of geography or identity than those of class aspirations. Thus this photograph of a wealthy Greek merchant family (fig. 8) indicates European affiliations not through their own home but through studio props that mark a modern fashionable identity, as indicated in Khalid’s description:

“Whatever is to be found in the studio, whether backdrops or curtains and various chairs, tables, sofas, and so on, must be matted and without varnish. No chairs, tables, or consoles with sparkle should be present.”



— 8: Kostakis Gülbaloğlu and Maris-Aba Emfiezoglu, Nevşehir, c. 1870, Collection of Nikolas Theocharis. Private photographs from the era illustrate the common employment of aesthetic suggestions in M. Khalid’s manual.



— 9: Anestis and Nikolakis Gülbaloğlu, Nevşehir, c.1910, Collection of Nikolas Theocharis. Such private photographs indicate a shared appropriation of the visual sign systems that constituted the pan-ethnic Ottoman male subject.

Within an Ottoman context, a woman's uncovered hair would have designated her by default as a Christian; however, in this photograph of Greek gentlemen from Nevşehir, the man in his fez hat appears as a neutral, upper-class Ottoman subject (fig. 9). Like the photograph of my great-grandfather and his colleague, who were both probably Muslim, a photograph of Greek men from the same era provides no indication of identity beyond the fez indicating Ottoman citizenship—as a studio, the setting indicates a broad affiliation with modernity, while the suits suggest an affiliation with European norms. Similarly, Khalid positions photography as suggestive of an aspirational identity much more clearly than an ethnic one:

“In fact, if the person whose photograph is being taken wants a book or two on the table, even their bindings should not be shiny or sparkling. Or they should be arranged so that their shiny sides are hidden.”



— 10: Author's Grandmother, Seniha Kural, c. 1922, Author's collection. Photographs of girls provided a further venue for the imagination of a national citizen of indeterminate ethnicity.

In photographs of children, such as a photograph of my grandmother (which strangely adheres to these norms even though it is from a much later era), the youth of the female subject made it possible to neutralize ethnic identity even further (fig. 10). Instead, the photograph emphasizes upper-class aspirations, such as female education, suggested by the desk and the book in the picture. Surrounding the sitter with such attributes and providing fixed poses enabled the formation of an identity that was dislocated from place in the sense of representing culture to others.

The regional neutrality expressed in the manual of a practice that could be executed anywhere by anybody is underscored by the extra, non-photographic equipment proposed in the manual to serve as studio props:

“Photographs taken in this manner should use a nice backdrop of a garden. If in the studio there is a backdrop of a forest to be used, then it would not be appro-



— 11: Anonymous Female Relative of Author, Author's collection. Portrait photographs of veiled women undermine our assumptions about the nature of an identity photograph: what can we know about a subject visually when the face refuses to divulge itself for our eyes?

priate to take the picture of a man seated in a decorated chair or at an elegant table in front of it, so there should be appropriate lightweight things to sit on or perhaps an imitation tree trunk.”

“And one should have some hay and thin sawdust on the floor for when the photograph is to be taken. If a seaside backdrop is to be used, then artificial stones and rocks should be used. There are wonderful ones of these. They can even be used with backdrops of forests. It is suggested that dark ones are used.”

Through this transition from representing collective to representing personal identity, photography hence ceases to be an index of geography as coded under the name of the state, but instead, of individualized identity, which could serve both private and public purposes. The publication of Khalid’s book for amateurs was part and parcel of a broader shift in Ottoman photography, from a practice coded through geography toward one coded through modernity. In 1893, the state recognized that photography had become a private commercial enterprise profitable enough to require taxation.¹³ The following year, photographs began to be recorded in Ottoman archival records in relation to passports—at first as supplements to incomplete documents of travelers; then in 1898, as a requirement for Armenian men over age 18 emigrating to the United States in order to ensure the permanence of their emigration; and eventually, in 1912, as a requirement for international travel to diverse places, including Hungary and Germany.¹⁴ Most interestingly, as passports with photographs became increasingly common requirements for travelers, the requirement for women decreased over time. Whereas initially Muslim women had to be photographed without their face veils, later the requirement for Muslim women to have passport photographs at all was rescinded meaning that women were no longer required to have identity photographs on their travel documents.¹⁵ Thus the last identity photographs, which in concealing the identity of the sitter also conveyed ethnicity, ceased to form a part of the photographic image-production of the Ottoman state. As photography became more modern, it became less inflected by the signs of “Ottoman-ness” and ethnic identity, which had initially characterized photography by Europeans and early Ottoman photographers in the empire.

What I am left with is a photograph from my family album of a Muslim Ottoman woman looking away from the photographer (fig. 11). I do not know who she is; I can imagine that she might have looked a bit like I do. To us today, looking back in time and away in space, this is an Ottoman photograph. But its modernity is less in its quintessential representation of the “Orient” than in the tension between the modern format of a *carte de visite* portrait—perhaps one used to introduce a bride—and the tradition of not viewing an Ottoman Muslim woman except within a familial context. It is Ottoman, not because of what it shows, but because of what it does not: the

conundrum of the modern presumed to be universal that expresses its conflicts, not because it displays local identity, but because it does so despite itself.

NOTES

- 1 Many thanks to Staci Scheiwiller for her thoughtful and provocative editing of this text. A work that addresses such issues is Schwartz, *Picturing Place*.
- 2 For example, see Özendes, *Photography*; Öztuncay, *Dersaadet*.
- 3 See Arago, "Report."
- 4 Nickel, *Francis Frith*.
- 5 See Denny, "Quotations"; and Çelik, "Framing."
- 6 See Hight/Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography*.
- 7 Oettermann, *Panorama*, 119.
- 8 Özendes, *Photography*, 44–55; see also Woodward, "Photographic Practice."
- 9 See Shaw, "Modernisms Innocent Eye."
- 10 See Allen, "Abdul Hamid Colelction"; Gavin/Tekin/Tekin (eds.), "Imperial Self Portrait"; and Waley, "Images." Many images from the Abdülhamid Albums are available online at the Library of Congress website: www.loc.gov
- 11 See Ersoy, "Sartorial Tribute."
- 12 Özendes, *Photography*, 313; Hamdi Pashazade M. Khalid, *Ameli*, unpaginated.
- 13 Republic of Turkey, Archives of the Office of the Prime Minister. Yildiz Maliye Nezareti Maruzati. 14:26, 21/R /1310.
- 14 Republic of Turkey, Archives of the Office of the Prime Minister. Zabtiye 315:105, 24/Ma/1316; Dahiliye Muamelat, 79:56, 21/Ra/1333; Dahiliye Muamelat, 25/Ra/1333 79:61.
- 15 Republic of Turkey, Archives of the Office of the Prime Minister. Dahiliye İdare-i Umu-miye Ekleri, 53:120; Dahiliye İdare-i Umumiyye, 19:/-08: 1/77.

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- 1, 2, 10, 11: Author's collection.
- 3: Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 4: Hamdy Bey, Marie de Launay, *Les costumes populaires de la Turquie en 1873*.
- 5: Library of Congress collections, Reproduction number LC-USZ62-80875.
- 6: Library of Congress collections Reproduction number LC-USZ62-7968.
- 7: Hamdi Pashazade M. Khalid, *Ameli ve nazari mufassal fotografya*.
- 8, 9: Collection of Nikolas Theocharis.

WRITTEN IMAGES: POEMS ON EARLY IRANIAN PORTRAIT
STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY (1864–1930) AND CONSTITUTIONAL
REVOLUTION POSTCARDS (1905–1911)

“An image is worth a thousand words.” So reads a well-known saying extant in most European languages and also in some Asian languages, such as Japanese, but not Persian. This saying would seem to be called into question by written images, such as those presented here. Why did Iranian photographers, calligraphers, sitters, and collectors of the Qajar era (1785–1925) write on their photographs? What kinds of messages were written? Did they complement the image? Did the writing change the meaning or reading of visual images? This paper examines photographs dated from 1864 to 1930 and postcards printed during the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) and its aftermath.¹

Regarding the traditional usage of inscriptions in all different media within the vast spectrum of Iranian visual arts, Islamic art historian Sheila Blair has stated:

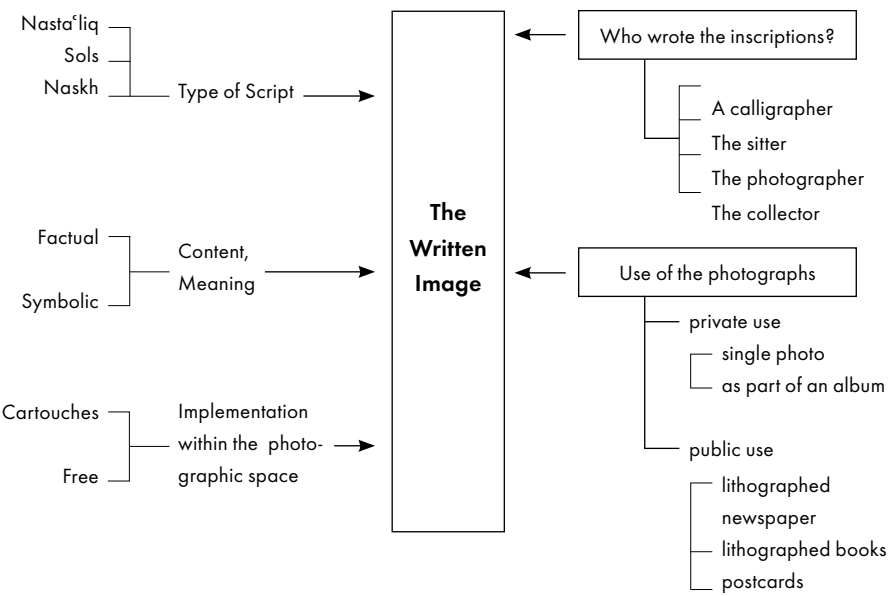
“[I]n the Islamic lands the earlier tradition of monumental writing not only continued but expanded. Inscriptions occur on objects of all media and materials, from the humblest, such as oil lamps and other unglazed ceramics, to the finest and most expensive, including rock crystals and jades. Inscriptions were added even in media where the technical limitations of the material make it extremely difficult to incorporate a running text, like silk textiles [...]. The demand for inscribed textiles was so great, however, that silk weavers in the Islamic countries soon overcame the confines of the technique, and by the tenth century Persian weavers had figured out how to incorporate long bands of inscriptions on their elaborated patterned silks woven on draw looms.”²

With such a long and well-rooted tradition of placing inscriptions on every possible object, regardless of size or function, in early Islamic Iran, it is not striking that one can find nineteenth-century Iranian photographs that bear inscriptions within photographic spaces.

There are (at least) three possible ways of classifying photographs in regard to this topic of inscribing images: by the type of script; by the content and meaning of

the inscriptions; and by the way in which inscriptions have been used within the photographic space (composition). Basically, *how*, *what*, and *where* were the inscriptions written? For the first classification, I have defined three groups: *nasta'liq*, *sols*, and *naskh*.³ For the second classification, I have defined two groups: factual information and poetic or symbolic meaning. The third classification includes two groups: framed and freely-written on the photographic space. The first and second classifications can also be identified with and related to either decorative purposes, which include both calligraphic-like and symbolic or poetic meanings, or to practical purposes, which include both text and factual information. For the present article, I classify the photographs according to the types of content and meanings of the poems.

The schema below is a set of classifications established during research on the topics addressed through written photographs (Table 1).⁴



- A preliminary classification of the types of poems written on the photographs and postcards is:
- Poems written for or about the sitter or sitters (poems devoted to their personalities or occupations):
 - Photographs
 - Postcards: poem written for or about the sitter but with a wider sociopolitical purpose (outreach)

- Poems by a famous Persian poet, such as Sa'di Shirazi (1210–c. 1291) or Hafez (c. 1325–ca. 1389);
- A philosophical thought or statement written in poetic prose
- Religious messages: Qur'anic and Bahai faith verses

PHOTOGRAPHS: A POEM FOR THE SITTER

The first group when considering the content of the inscriptions is images that bear a poem about the sitter—a poem written *specifically* for that image and that sitter, such as the portrait of Crown Prince Mozaffar al-Din Mirza Qajar (r. 1896–1907) (fig. 1).



— 1: Anonymous Iranian photographer, Crown Prince Mozaffar al-Din Mirza, c. 1864–1866, albumen print, Archive of the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies, Tehran.

There is an inscription in nasta'liq placed in four cartouches, one on each corner of the image:

این عکس که در قالب دولت جان است تمثال ولیعهد فلک دربان است
سلطان جهان مظفرالدین شاه است کامروز خدیو خطه ایران است

The inscription is a poem about the sitter that provides factual information about him at the same time. The poem has been written *for* this photograph, which is an interesting element that one can find in other photographs selected for this paper: a poem is written about the personality and/or occupation of the sitter and is placed on the photographic surface. The inscription reads (my translation):

“This portrait that is so real / Is the face of the prince who is guarded by the heavens” (upper two cartouches). “The king of the world is Mozaffar al-Din Shah / Who is also now *Khadiv* [the sovereign, king or master] of the country Iran” (bottom two cartouches).

This inscription was surely added some years later, since in the poem the sitter is mentioned as shah, whereas in the photograph he was still a prince (c. 1864–66). This portrait presents the sitter in a typical pose used by court photographers, and one can find many examples like this one when going through the albums of his father, Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–1896), and his family kept in the Golestan Palace library. The pose was inherited from the Qajar portrait paintings of Fath-‘Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797–1834) and Naser al-Din Shah, who both helped to propagate the royal Qajar image worldwide.⁵

The next photograph depicts the poet Habibollah Qa’ani (1808–1854) taken sometime around the late 1840s–early 1850s (fig. 2).

The inscription in nasta’liq in the upper left-hand corner is one of his poems with autobiographical content:

“It is not a defect if Qa’ani has grown old / His God is mighty (has a powerful hand) / Qa’ani, by his nature, will be like a lion on the Day of Judgement / With your kindness, he will be taken to the Paradise with no question.”

قآنی ار ز پای فتاده است عیب نیست
نیکو قویست دست توانا خدای او
قآنی از کنه چو هراسد بروز حشر
بی پرسش بخلد برند از ولای تو

The text speaks about the weakness, lack of energy, and fear of the poet, and how they are all taken care of by God. The cushion behind the sitter’s back, the water pipe, the



— 2: Anonymous Iranian photographer, Qa'ani, the poet, c. 1860, albumen print, Iraj Afshar Collection, Teheran.

traditional kneeling pose, and the inscription all result in an image that resembles those of miniature painting studios.⁶

During the last part of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth centuries there was a very active family of photographers in Shiraz. The first photographer in this family was Mirza Hasan (1853–1915), who was active from around 1870. An interesting photograph taken by him presents a group of poets from Shiraz in 1894 (fig. 3).

Above:

که کلك صنع نبندد دگر چنین تمثال
یکی چون ده و دو زادگان بفضل و کمال
بغیر من همه نیکو نهاد و نیک خصال
خلاف من همه روشندل شگرف سگال
خبر ز جمله القاب این بزرگ رجال
ز ابتدای یمین تا بانهای شمال
نثار کردن جان است افضل الاعمال
که هست پایه قدرش برون ز حد خیال
مسخرش بود از فیض ایزد متعال
که سوده بر قدمش هرلبیب روی سؤال
ولی بدر کهکشان [...]

تبارك الله از این صفحه‌ی خجسته مثال
نیاورند دگر چار مام و هفت پدر
فراز کرسی یکصف نموده‌اند جلوس
به پیش کرسی یک رسته کرده‌اند قعود
تو را که ناظر این مجلسی اگر باید
کنم صفت ز نخستین صفت که هشت تن‌اند
یکی نثار بود بخردی که بر نظم‌ش
دگر بصیر خردمند حضرت قدسی
دگر یگانه دهر ایزدی که ملک سخن
دگر حکیم سخندان جناب آسوده
دگر منم یک از ایشان که فرصتم خوانند

Below:

دگر نوا که بود تاج فرق اهل سخن	بجای نظم فشاند گهر ز درج مقال
دگر شعاع که طبع بلند روشن اوست	چو آفتاب فروزان ولی برون ز زوال
کنون ز چار تن دیگر ار نشان خواهی	بدان و تیره و ترتیب گویمت فی الحال
مظفر است نخستین که اندر این میدان	مظفر است بهر کوست خصم زشت فعال
دگر حسن که بطبع حسان و خط حسن	کسش نبود نظیر و کسش نبود همال
دگر فریفته دل شیفته که چون خورشید	بود رفیع مکان بر سپهر عز و جلال
دگر فصیحی آن شاعر فصیح زبان	که در محامد و اوصاف اوست ناطقه لال
به حرف اول القابشان فزا رجبی	که تا بدانی تاریخ ماه، هجری سال

حرزه العبد العاصی علی نقی الشیرازی فی شهر الله الاعظم رمضان المبارک سنه ۱۳۱۵

Above or below each of them, one can read their names: four are kneeling in the traditional pose, and eight are seated on chairs. This photograph is also arranged in miniature style with inscriptions placed in cartouches above and below the image. In clear nasta'liq, one can read the poem:

The Iranian poet 'Abd al-Asi 'Ali Naqi al-Shirazi is the author of this poem, which contains a poetic exaltation of the good personal qualities of each poet depicted in the photograph. Photohistorian and collector Mansour Sane states in *Photography in Shiraz* (1990): "[A] photographer without any knowledge of poetry would be incomplete just in the same way a poet ignorant of images would be."⁷ In Iran, often both literary and artistic traditions are so intermingled that it is impossible to understand them properly as independent artistic expressions. Poetry is deeply rooted in the culture's subconscious and impregnates its metaphoric language in all art forms. As Blair explains:

"Persian verses became standard decoration on many other types of art made in Iran from the twelfth century onwards... Some verses were taken from well-known poets, others were composed for the occasion."⁸

Persian verses were also used in textiles and in carpets, such as on the Ardabil carpets housed in major museums.⁹ Blair presents an interesting example of a silk dated to the twelfth century in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts that has a Persian quatrain: "Composed for the occasion, the verse is written in the first person as though the textile were speaking." She states further:

"Persian poetry became increasingly popular on objects from the fifteenth century onwards. The Persian verses were drawn from a wide repertory of classical



— 3: Mirza Hasan 'Akkasbashi, Poets in Shiraz, c. 1895, albumen print, Collection Mansour Sane, Shiraz.

poets, such as Daqiqi, Firdawsi, Sa' di and Hafiz. The text also refers to the objects on which they are inscribed.”¹⁰

For this image, a poem was especially composed about the persons depicted in the photograph, and it is, therefore, also a good example to illustrate Blair's statement introduced above. The poem reads:

“Praise be to the Lord for this blessed page,
No artist's brush such an image could create,

Not even Four Mothers and Seven Fathers will bring forth again
 The like of these two and ten wise and learned men sitting on the seats, a row
 Of whom-but for me- are all luminous of heart and profound of soul.
 And before the seats posing in a line
 Unlike myself, all graceful and with good mind.
 If you, oh, viewer of this group, would know
 Of all the titles of these great men
 I shall begin with the eight in the first row
 From the far right to the extreme left,
 One is Nessar¹¹ the wise man to whose poetic line
 One can sacrifice his precious life
 One is the discerning, wise, His Excellency Ghodsi,
 The fame of his grandeur beyond imagination
 One is the unique man of his time, Izadi,
 who reigns the world of speech
 The other, His Excellency Asoudeh,¹² the most learned and lucid
 On whose feet all the learned rub their imploring faces
 The other is I, Forsat,
 Yet in their company I am less than dust on their shoes
 One is Vahid-Zaman, philosopher and scholar
 The other, courteous Sadeq, who is beyond compare
 Another is Nava, the crown of eloquent men
 Speaks such verses as bright as gem,
 Another is Sho'a¹³ whose lofty nature is brilliant.
 Like the blazing Sun which never sets and is always radiant
 If you would know the names of the other four men,
 Their manner and education I shall tell you in turn
 The prime is Mozaffar, the victor in this field
 who defeats every evil and every fiend
 Another is Hasan,¹⁴ the elegant calligrapher
 With good natured and peerless in time
 Next is Shifteh,¹⁵ his heart enchanted, radiant like the Sun
 which holds the loftiest place in Mighty and Glorious sky.
 Another is Fassihi,¹⁶ the poet of eloquent song
 Before whom the most articulate will hold their tongue
 Add to the first letter of their titles one Rajab
 And you will find the day of the month and the year

 Composed by 'Abd al-Asi 'Ali Naqi al-Shirazi, in the Great God's month of
 Ramazan, on the blessed date of 1315."

POSTCARDS: FOLK VERSES VERSUS POLITICAL MESSAGES

It is not only the loose or individual photograph that bears inscriptions in the form of a poem written for the sitter. A remarkable amount of postcards, especially from the Constitutional Revolution period, also display such inscriptions; some of them show quite macabre images (i.e., a beheaded sitter next to a poem written for him or about him). This tremendous contrast between the nature/content of the image and the inherent delicacy of a poem is most striking. As noted by photohistorian Reza Sheikh:

“[M]any of the photographs of the constitutional period that have reached us today are inscribed. People and events have been identified, while verses of poetry are also prominent and are commonly used to invoke feelings of loss, despair, and nostalgia. These words are the handprints of a public that is reaching out to a momentous event in the past. This is no longer *taking* pictures, it is *making* an image.”¹⁸

Picture postcards, as argued by Sassan Pejhan, were first used in Iran around 1898 when private publishers printed pictures on the (blank) backs of officially-issued postcards. He goes on further to state that on seeing the popular attraction of these cards, the government ordered the printing of official picture postcards in 1903.¹⁹

The fact that poetry dominated these popular postcards in such a massive way is not accidental. In fact, poetry, like photography, was revolutionized during the constitutional period, and it was very much a parallel process between the two—from an elitist approach to a more popular one. As stated by the scholar Homa Katouzian:

“The Constitutional Revolution saw a flowering of young poetical talents who wrote mostly on social and political subjects and published them immediately in newspapers and political tracts. Their poetry was unmistakably fresh and modern, often experimenting with modified classical and neoclassical structures, innovating new figures of speech and literary devices, and sometimes using colloquial, even folk, words and expressions.”

“Thus Persian poetry, having been the main vehicle throughout its long history of literacy and social expression, discharging sentiments, moralizing, disparaging, and lampooning, came into its own as the most effective instrument used in popular campaigns for constitutionalism, law, freedom and even nationalism, and against arbitrary rule, backwardness, and corruption.”²⁰

With it, the postcard became an ideal medium to spread *en masse* those popular feelings aroused during the revolution period.

The first postcard selected for this paper is a collage of a photograph and different inscriptions (fig. 4). The sitter is identified in the top inscription as Gholam-Hosayn Nayer-e Nuri, and his “friend” (referring to the skull in his hand) is identified as Gholam-‘Ali Kajvari. The second inscription (in the center of the postcard) tells of the events related to this photograph, and on the bottom of the postcard, a poem has been written in the memory of the sitter’s friend. The text of the inscriptions reads:

غلامحسین نیر نوری و رفیق او غلامعلی کجوری
این سر است که مدت شصت سال در ایام
حیاتش با من بود بعد از وفات بنا
بعهدی که داشتم بی او نتوانستم زیست
نمایم پنجمه بعد از دفن قبرش را
گشودم و سرش را برداشتم و شانزده سال است
با کله اش مونسم و باید با
خود در خانه قبر به برم
۱۳۲۶

1326

ای کله ای مهربان برادر من خوش بخواب که وقت بیداری نیست هرکس بیدار است
برسر دار است و هرکه هشیار است گرفتار مستبدین خونخوار است. وطن دریای خون گشته
و ابناء وطن در میانه این دریای خون آغشته دشناوری میکنند. آه آه چه روزگار
بعد از تو می بینم ای کاش می مردم و وطن عزیز را باین پریشان حالی از تعدی و ستم خیانت
کاران مشاهده نمی کردم. نبودی تا به بینی و از سوز دل خون گریه کنی. ای سر عزیز
اگر تو نبودی این برادر غم پرور عوض تو خونابه دل میریخت. اوضاع وطن را در آن عالم [۹]
حضوراً میگویم.

“Gholam-Hosayn Nayer-e Nuri and his friend Gholam-‘Ali Kajvari.

This is the same head that for a period of sixty years when he was alive / was with me. Then out of loyalty based on a promise that I had, I could not live without him. 5 months after the burial, I opened his grave / and took his head, and it has been 16 years / that I am the companion of his head, and I must take it with me when I go to [my] grave.

Ah, head of my kind brother, sleep well, for it is not the time to be up / whoever is up / his head is up [in a noose] in the cage of the bloodthirsty dictator / and the patriots of the homeland are afloat in a sea of blood. Oh, oh what days / after you I see. Ah, I wish I would die and not see the dear homeland in this turmoil



— 4: Gholam-Hosayn Nayer-e Nuri, postcard, Wolf-Dieter Lemke Collection, Berlin.

from the betrayal and injustice of traitors. / You were not [here] to see and to cry tears of blood from your burning heart. Oh dear head / you were not [here], but this sorrowful brother of yours cried his heart out instead of you. The affairs of the homeland I will tell you in the next world.”

The next postcard is a collage composed of a photograph of a drawing of Lady Justice and a long poem that explains the meaning of that symbol (fig. 5). The symbol of the judicial system is Lady Justice who is normally depicted with a set of scales typically suspended from her right hand, on which she measures the strengths of a case’s support and its opposition. She is often seen carrying a double-edged sword in her left hand (just like in the postcard), which symbolizes the power of Reason and Justice.²¹ Since the fourteenth century, Lady Justice has often been depicted wearing a blindfold. The blindfold represents objectivity, because it is thought that justice should be meted out objectively, without fear or favor and regardless of identity, money, power, or weakness.²²

In this postcard, there is an interesting amalgam of a European symbol for justice and a Persian poem precisely on the representation of justice. In the piece of poetry, the poet identifies Lady Justice with the constitution and explains in verse all the iconographical elements present in this drawing, such as the blindfold ("She has hidden eyes so that everything looks the same," alluding to justice). It also states that the light the constitution radiates from her head (see the drawing) illuminates the whole world.

نور مشروطه عالمگیر باد

مژده باد ای جماعت ایران

ویکه بودید جمله سرگردان

نظر صاحب زمین و زمان	بر شما افتاده است ز کرم
دادگر کرد داد از احسان	بعد از این وقت عدل و داد بود
تا که ایران شود ز عدل جنان	داد مشروطه را بایرانی
قدر او واضح است در قرآن	شرط آن است قدر وی دانید
یک به یک بر تومن کنم اعلان	حال نیکوست حال این صورت
میدهد امر عدل و داد نشان	این زنی که ستاده مشروطه است
نیز بردست دیگرش میزان	در ید چپ وی را بود تیغی
که بیائید شویم ما یکسان	بگرفته از آن جهت در دست
گر بود قطره یا عمان	یعنی حق حق بود به وقت حساب
یک بود در حساب در دوران	گاه یا کوه هر چه کو باشد
باید حکمش شود به دهر روان	نیز از روی عدل و داد حاکم
بصداقت شوند چون سلمان	حکمران در زمانه میباید
فکر لشکر کنیم در هر آن	تیغ یعنی واجبست به ما
نام و ناموس و عرض پیر و جوان	تا بمانند بی خطر به جهان
با چنین تیغ سرکش بران	دفع دشمن کنیم و چاره ظلم
که ندیده شویم یکدل و جان	چشم خود بسته است از آنرو
جان یکی گر شده دو جامه بر آن	یعنی ایران تمام یک جان است
نیست فرقی میانه ایشان	سنی و شیعه هر که ایرانی است
راه یک نیز یک بود قرآن	یک پیمبر بود یکی قبله
ظلم باشد سیاه کرده جهان	بر سر او سیاه در نظر است
این سیه بود درد بی درمان	این سیه سوخت جان ایران را
این سیه کرده است وطن ویران	این سیه روز مابود که سیاه است
این سیه بود آتش سوزان	این سیه جان خشک و تر بسوخت
دفع او کرد قادر یزدان	از سر لطف از سر ما
آنکه اندر نظر تورا است عیان	از سرش نور عدل و داد بود



— 5: Lady Liberty, postcard, Wolf-Dieter Lemke Collection, Berlin.

کرده دنیا را ز خود تابان	نور مشروطه است از رخ او
برده است آن سیاه از میان	لله الحمد نور انوراو
همتی تا رود تمامی آن	رفت بسیار آن سیاه کم ماند
اتحاد است درد را درمان	اتحادی کنید در این باب
وطن آنگاه گردد آبادان	با هم امروز اتحاد کنید
می زنم داد تا که دارم جان	نیز من این دو بند را دایم
بل شود چاره ز استبداد	میزنم داد تا رسند به داد

One of the inscriptions at the top reads: “The dark obscurity fades away with the light of Justice”; in the column just behind Lady Justice, there are two inscriptions—the top one informs us of the date of the Iranian constitution (1324), and the bottom one reads “Justice and Help”; the one below Lady Justice, reads: “Servant of his country’s patriots, Gholam-Hosayn Nayer-e Nuri al-Mazandarani, 1326, Tbilisi.” Note that the name of the man written on this postcard is the same name that identifies the sitter in the previous postcard.



— 6: Colonel Mohammad Taqi-Khan Soltanzadeh, postcard, Wolf-Dieter Lemke Collection, Berlin.

The next postcard is especially striking as far as its content is concerned; on the front, there is a portrait of one of the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution (fig. 6).

In the right “cloud,” it is written: “Martyr of the way to freedom and modernism in Iran,” and in the left “cloud,” it is “Colonel Mohammad Taqi-Khan Soltanzadeh Pessian [1892–1921].” A poem has been written below his portrait:

گر نا مراد کشته شدی در زمین عشق عشق تو گشت در دل ما زنده جاودان

On the back of this postcard, there is a photograph of the sitter beheaded, as we are informed by an inscription above the image:

سر کلنل که پس از کشتن بریده در کوچه ها گردانده اند

“They have cut off the head of the colonel after killing him and rolled it in the streets.” Under it, a piece of poetry is written for him, his commitment, and his fight for the cause:

این سر که نشان سرپرستی است امروز رها ز قید هستی است
با دیده عبرتش به بینید این عاقبت وطنپرستی است

The translation reads: "This head, which is the sign of leadership / Is today void of life / Behold the sight and know / This is the consequence of love for the nation."²³

The next image (fig. 7) was circulating as a postcard at the time considered here, and it is easy to find slightly different versions of it. These postcards, and the events that they narrated (a fighter hung without a trial), became visual icons of an entire movement. Many different versions of these postcards were printed, but all of them were inscribed with a similar poem and message:

چه خوب ایندم خود را بر سر دار فنا دیدم
خود را سر بلند و عالمی را زیر پا دیدم
یک آزادی طلب ۲ صفر ۱۳۲۷ طناب انداخته شد بدون محاکمه

The translation reads: "How happy I am to see myself on top of this scaffold / I am exalted, and the world is under my feet / The freedom fighter was hung without trial on 2 Safar 1327 [hijra]."²⁴

David Fraser, a special correspondent for *The Times* newspaper sent to Persia in the stormy year of 1909, published in *Persia and Turkey in Revolt*,²⁵ a photograph of this well-known incident but from another angle.²⁶ Fraser explains in detail in his book about how this unfortunate event happened and the consequences of it:

"Teheran meanwhile was not without its emotional moments. One of these occurred when the police arrested three men on the alleged ground that they were carrying bombs. One was immediately strangled and the corpse suspended in a public gateway, where, next day, the townspeople flocked to see the gruesome sight. It was announced that the other two would be similarly dealt with on successive days, but before that occurred it transpired that the first victim carried a paper which implied the protection of the British Legation. That made for trouble to the Persian Government, and the outcome was an undertaking that there would be no more executions without a proper trial. The Nationalists were emphatic in declaring that the charge was bogus, and a mere excuse for murdering an individual who had incurred the Shah's displeasure. There was a great deal of talk at the time about bombs, and while it was quite possible that the men arrested were actually in possession of such things, the probabilities were that they were innocent. In any case, the man hanged was known to be taking a prominent part as intermediary between leading Nationalists and persons in sanctuary for political reasons, and his fate gave many schemers against the Government a considerable fright."²⁷

The next image is a portrait of the three clerics of Najaf who were prominent during the constitutional movement (fig. 8).²⁸ The text in Persian inscribed on the photograph here reads:



— 7: “Esmail Khan, un bon libéral,” postcard, Wolf-Dieter Lemke Collection, Berlin.

این نقش وجود تو که در اینورق است
 جانپست که آرایش این ما خلق است
 عکس رخ تست تافته در عالم
 زین است که جمله عالم اندر شفق است

The translation reads: “The trace of Your existence that is found on this sheet / Is the soul that adorns us, Your creations / It is the picture of Your face that is entwined in this world / This is why the whole world is (glowing) red.”²⁹

This photograph (without any inscription) was probably published for the first time in Edward Granville Browne’s *The Persian Revolution 1905–1909* (1910).³⁰ The three sitters were identified in the caption in Browne’s book as: “Mullá Muhammad Karim al-Kharistani; Hajji Mirza Husayn ibn Khalil; and Mullá Abdoullah al-Manzandarani. The three great Mujahids, who supported the National Cause.” It was also published later in Ahmad Kasravi’s 1939 book *Tarikh-e mashruteh-ye Iran* (History of the Iranian Constitution) on page 283. The first photograph considered here is actually a collage



— 8: The three clerics of Najaf, Elmar Siebel Collection, Boston.

of the same portrait of three men with three different documents relating to the Constitutional Revolution that were in fact all signed by these men.

A most often printed and widely circulated postcard of this period is a famous picture, often published in different books since the time of the Constitutional Revolution, depicting the Bagh-e Shah detainees of July 4, 1908. There are several versions of this picture, and they bear different inscriptions. I have selected the one with a poem that is printed in Browne's *The Persian Revolution 1905–1909*.³¹ The poem reads:

آنکه دایم هوس سوختن ما میکرد
کاش می آمد و از دور تماشا میکرد

“He whose wish for us to burn was constant / would that he could see us from a distance now.”³²

As has been noted, a rich selection of popular poems was written by anonymous authors on the photographs and postcards; their content was highly political and the language was popular as well. As Katouzian explains:

“Thus the revolutionary movement led to a spontaneous revolution in Persian poetry, whereby, notwithstanding the continuing use of classical genres and structures, there was radical change in themes, words, and language as well as imageries and other literary devices employed. Virtually all revolutionary poetry was much simpler than in the past in its diction, and this was all the more so in the case of the new and innovative folk and colloquial verses. And since the revolutionary poetry was almost daily produced and published, it made substantial contribution to the directing and shaping of public opinion, especially among urban crowds.”³³

Powerful images, often macabre ones, placed next to popular and political verses helped to create an image with a long lasting effect on viewers, which resulted expressly from joining the two media of words and images.

POEM BY A FAMOUS PERSIAN POET

A portrait of the Iranian photographer Mirza Mohammad Rahim ‘Akkasbashi, taken by the Iranian photographer Amir Sayyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hosayni, bears a poem by a famous Persian poet (fig. 9). This image is interesting because we find two different ways of implementing inscriptions within the photographic space. The first one is the traditional way of using calligraphy within the pictorial space—the cursive flowing harmoniously on the photographic space (post-photographic phase). The second one uses a piece of paper to frame the text *in* the photographic space—notice the Kodak piece of paper, on which the name of the photographer who took this photograph is written: Amir Sayyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hosayni (pre-photographic phase).

On the left side of the photograph just above the sitter’s elbow one can read a poem by Sa’di, which is followed by the name of the sitter himself. The poem reads:

غرض نقشی است کز ما باز ماند
که هستی را نمی بینم بقایی
مگر صاحب دلی روزی برحمت
کند در حق اینجانب دعائی

میرزا محمد رحیم عکاسباشی چهره نگار ۱۳۰۶

“A wish is an image of us that survives / As I see that nothing else remains / One day maybe, a sage will mercifully / Request a prayer for me.” Markus Ritter noted that “these are the two last verses of the three-rhymed poem (*qit‘e*) by Sa’di, written in the

introduction of his *Gulistan* [656/1258],” and commented on their wide-spread use in pre-modern Persian art.³⁴

The signature on the photograph has been introduced, as in other photographs, by the word *‘amal*, and this agrees with Blair’s statement about the generalized use of this word to introduce signatures on objects. She states:

“[S]ignatures on objects are typically introduced by the word *‘amal* (‘work of’). The verb *sana‘a* was used for higher-status or more meticulous work. Artisans



— 9: Amir Sayyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hosayni (Ferdousi Photography Studio), Shiraz, Mirza Mohammad-Rahim ‘Akkasbashi, date unknown, albumen print, Archive of the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies, Tehran.

who signed their names with *‘amal* on metal bowls and other objects, for example, used *sana‘a* on astrolabes and other scientific instruments.”³⁵

The image has been mastered both in composition and atmosphere. The photograph is also remarkable for its pose, camera, and clothing. The clothes are a mixture of Iranian-style clothes with a European-style coat. The composition is a triangle formed by the camera (facing left), the chair (facing right), and the head of the sitter. The elegant pose of the photographer, together with his interesting face and appearance, complete a magnetic image that has been prepared with great detail and care.

A PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT OR STATEMENT

WRITTEN IN POETIC PROSE

The third group is composed of images, such as the one taken by the Iranian photographer ‘Abdolqasem Nuri (active from around the 1880s onward) (fig. 10). By presenting several typical Iranian elements inherited from the Persian painting tradition, this nineteenth-century Iranian photograph shows in a clear way the relationship between calligraphy, poetry, painting, and photography. In the upper part of the photograph one can see three groups of inscriptions, all of them in naskh. Here one can appreciate that the script has been written in a much more elaborate way than in the previous examples, with a more noticeable de-formatted composition of letters and with a freer understanding of space (some words are placed above or under the main line of the inscription).

The main inscription is:

خلق میبیند تصویر تو در یکشب بر جای
غافلند از یک جهان معنی که در تصویر تست

As for the other inscriptions in the portrait of this kneeling molla, the right cartouche contains the words, “Photograph of Hojjatoleslam,” and the left cartouche, “Fazel Sharbiyani al-‘Amalbojeh,” i.e., the person depicted in the photograph is being identified exactly as in Qajar portraits and in some miniatures, as noted above. The inscription in the upper center is a philosophical poem, a reflection on the importance of the meaning of the image beyond its mere form—its mere outer appearance. The inscription reads: “The people see his image / without noticing the deep meaning that underlies it.” Finally, one can read in the lower inscription, also in naskh: “The work of the photographer Abolqasem Ebn Mohammad Taqi Nuri, taken in the year 1305.” Interestingly, the word *‘amal* has been used here to introduce the signature on the photograph, as traditionally done on objects. This is a remarkable parallel in the way



— 10: ‘Abd al-Qasem Ebn al-Nuri, Fazel Sharbiyani
Edamelbojeh, c. 1889, albumen print, Golestan Palace,
Library, Tehran.

the inscriptions have been placed on all kinds of objects, including photography. The pose of the man depicted here, the traditional kneeling one inherited from miniature portraits, together with the paraphernalia (cushions behind the back, the Persian carpet, and the *tasbeih*, i.e., prayer beads, that the molla is holding) result in an image that resembles Persian miniatures. As stated by Islamic art historian Yves Porter:

“[T]he duality between *surat* (form) and *ma‘ni* (meaning) can be related to the Sufi notion of *zāhir*, ‘the exterior’ and *bātin*, ‘the interior,’ as well as to the Zoroastrian complementary opposition between *menok* and *getik*. Every creature has a double nature: *getik*, the terrestrial, opaque, heavy, and *menok*, the ethereal, transparent, subtle one.”³⁶

Further, in the words of the scholar in Persian literature Johann Christoph Bürgel:

“[F]or the mystic spectator, all earthly beauty points to the Divine, and by this very fact all the phenomena of creation transcend themselves, turn into symbols, which by their outward appearance (*zahir*, exterior, form) veil and, at the same time partly unveil, an inner meaning (*batin*, interior, *ma’ni*, meaning), point to a higher layer of existence.”³⁷

This relationship between outward form and inner essence is treated directly in the writings of the great medieval Iranian scholar al-Ghazali (1059–1111) on the nature of beauty. In the words of the Islamic art historian Priscilla Soucek:

“Ghazali discusses several types of beauty and the manner in which they are perceived by the senses in an ascending progression that moves from the beauty of man to that of the creation and finally focuses on how to define God’s beauty. The faculty of sight and the related skill of visual imagination are important aspects of this process. The eye is attracted to beauty and takes pleasure from its perception.”³⁸

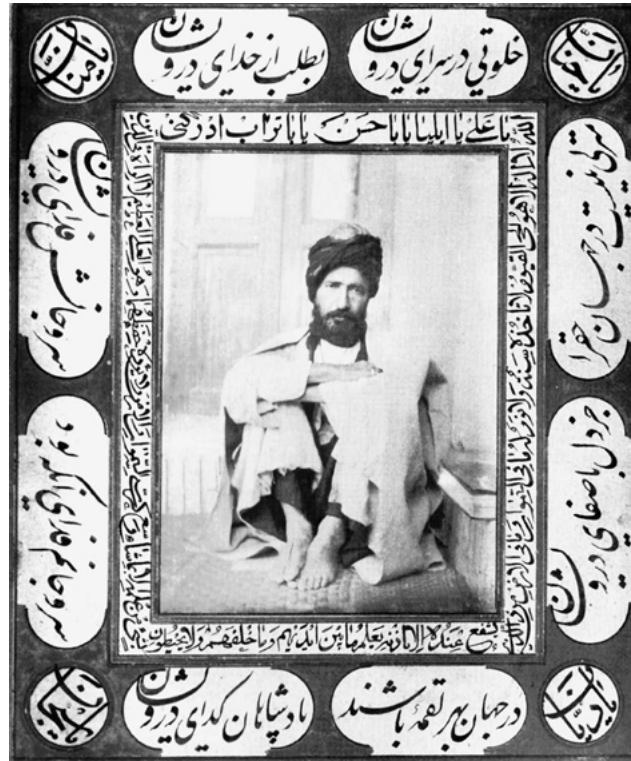
In a similar way, another great Sufi poet, Mowlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273), acknowledges the power of images and stresses their inherent limitations.³⁹

‘Abdolqasem Nuri took another photograph as well, as one can read in the inscription, which appears in naskh under the feet of the persons depicted.¹⁷ The rest of the photograph is framed by one inscription in nasta’liq, just as in miniatures. In fact, this photograph acts like a minitature painting. It is kept at the Golestan Palace library, where there is one album (461) with 28 photographs taken by ‘Abdolqasem Nuri, including this image.

RELIGIOUS MESSAGES: QUR’ANIC AND BAHAI FAITH VERSES

The next image of an unknown dervish shows that the continuation of the tradition of illuminating paintings with poems found its way into photography (fig. 11). Two different kinds of scripts have been used: in the inner frame, the inscription is written in naskh, which is the script that was normally used to write Qur’anic verses as is the case here; and the inscription in the outer frame is written in nasta’liq. Both inscriptions have been written in a very elaborate way.

The outer frame contains a poem about the figure of the dervishes and their philosophy. The text in no. 13 is barely legible:



— 11: Gholam-Hosayn Derakhshan, Dervish, c. 1930s, Parisa Damandan Collection.

Upper outer frame:

- 1 یا حنان
- 2 خلوتی در سرای درویشان
- 3 بطلب از خدای درویشان
- 4 یا منان

Lower outer frame:

- 5 یا دیان
- 6 در جهان بهر لقمه باشند
- 7 پادشاهان گدای درویشان
- 8 یا سبحان

Right outer frame:

- 9 منزلی نیست در جهان حقرا
- 10 جز دل با صفای درویشان

Left outer frame:

11 سرو جانم فدای آنکه بود

12 سر و جانم فدای درویشان

Inner frame, right, bottom, left:

13 الله لا إله إلا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السماوات و ما في الأرض من
 ذالذي يشفع عنده إلا بإذنه يعلم ما بين أيديهم و ما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشيء من علمه إلا بما
 شاء وسع كرسيه السماوات و الأرض و لا يئوده حفظهما و هو العلي العظيم لا أكراه في الدين

Inner frame, top:

14 يا على يا ايليا يا باحسن يا با تراب ادركنى

Here, the photograph seems to illustrate the text as in the miniatures. The inscription reads (outer frame):

“Ask Dervishes’s god for a solace in their abode / In the world Truth has no abode / Other than in the pure hearts of the dervishes / For the tiniest morsels in this world / Kings beg the dervishes / Let my body and soul be sacrificed / To him whose body and soul is sacrificed to the dervishes.”⁴⁰

In the inner frame of the photograph, one can read several famous verses from the Qur’an, sura 2, al-Baqarah (The Cow), the Throne Verse, verses 255 and 256:

“Allah is He beside Whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what pleases Him. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not. And He is the Highest, the Greatest.”

They are followed by:

“‘There is no compulsion in religion [...]

Oh ‘Ali! Oh Iliya; Oh Father of Hasan! Oh Father of Turab! (?) Take me.”⁴¹

The Throne Verse is one of the most popular Qur’anic quotations in pre-modern inscriptions in architecture and objects of art.⁴² There seems to be no practical pur-

pose in its use on a photograph; therefore, it is easier to see it as a formula in calligraphy than in other cases, in which the text gives the reader plain factual information.

The next photograph, depicting a man in chains escorted by two military men, bears an inscription in Arabic above the photograph (fig. 12):

هو الأبهي
إذا أَمَعَنْتَ النَّظَرَ تَحْصِلُ هَذِهِ الصُّورَةَ مُقَابِلًا لَعَيْنَيْكَ إِنْسَانًا مَغْلُولًا مُسَلَّسًا تَلُوحُ فِي وَجْهِهِ لَوَائِحُ
الْبُشْرِ وَالرِّضَاءِ مِمَّا أَصَابَهُ فِي مَحَبَّةٍ مَحْبُوبَةٍ الْأَبْهِي وَيَقُولُ رَبِّ زِدْنِي بِلَاءً فِي سَبِيلِكَ فَإِنَّهُ شَفَاءٌ عَلَيَّ
وَرَوَاءُ عُقْلِي وَبَرْدٌ لَوْعَتِي وَهَذِهِ السَّلَاسِلُ فَلَا تَدُ الْعُقَيَانَ وَعُقُودُ الْجَمَانِ يَا بَهَائِي الرَّحْمَنُ



— 12: Photographer unknown, Man with chains, albumen print, Elmar Siebel Collection, Boston.

“He is al-Abha

If you closely scrutinize this image [you see] before your eyes a human being shackled and fettered, in whose face shine the looks of mankind and the contentment about the love for his Abha beloved that struck him, while he is saying: Lord, increase my misery on your behalf, as it is the cure for my illness, the fresh water for my burning thirst, and the coolness for my agony, and these shackles are the necklaces of carnelians and the chaplets of pearls, O Bahai al-Rahman.”⁴³

This image may refer to an early episode in the Bahai faith, sometime after 1868, when Baha’ and his followers were exiled to Acre by the Ottoman authorities. It was there that 12 followers murdered seven adherents of Sobh-e Azal (1831–1912) or Azali Babis. As a punishment the Ottoman authorities forced the murderers to walk in chains for a period of time. In E. G. Browne’s *A Year amongst the Persians* (1893), we find mention of this episode:

“And now, ‘Sheykh’, I said, when we [Browne and Shaykh Ibrahim of Sultanabad] were alone, ‘will you tell me more fully about the murder of the seven Ezelís who were sent with Behá and his followers to Acre? You mentioned the fact a few days ago, and added that you have seen the assassins yourself during your stay there, and that they will still receive their prison allowance, though at large, and wore gyves on their ankles.’”⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

In closing, it is important to stress that although the information given in the inscription on a Qajar-era photograph could be either factual or interpretative, the language is always poetic. Consistently, most of the inscriptions found on nineteenth-century Iranian photographs are poems or have been written in a poetic tone, even if they are not known or famous poems. The same holds true for Iranian postcards. However, the nature of the content of the poem in one medium differs from that in the other: in photographs, the poem is devoted to the person depicted, whereas in postcards the poem carries a message for and from a social group—a whole society. A photograph was mainly an object of individual and private contemplation (as was the message of the poem) whereas the postcard, at least in the case of Iran during the period considered, became an object meant for collective and public contemplation (like the messages on their surfaces).

By far, the most common type of poem found in photographs and postcards was one written specially for the sitter. Traditionally this type of poem was written on all kind of objects. The poems on the individual photographs normally referred specifically to the sitter whereas in the postcards, the poems’ messages, if they did refer to

the sitter, went beyond that particular person to address a sentiment present for the entire society—that feeling of *loss, despair, and nostalgia*.⁴⁵

NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank: Staci Scheiwiller and Markus Ritter for their editorial work; I thank Ghazaal Bozorgmehr for the final and excellent editing of the Persian poems printed in this chapter and Safa Mahmoudian for her very careful revision of the Persian texts; Alireza Darvish for his help with reading the inscriptions on the photographs and postcards; Reza Sheikh for feedback on this topic and for the translation of several of the inscriptions written in Persian on the photographs and postcards; Wolf-Dieter Lemke (a private collector based in Berlin) and Elmar Siebel (a private collector based in Boston) for showing me their collections and for giving me permission to publish some images. I am grateful to Just Jan Witkam, who kindly translated some inscriptions written in Arabic for me and also made some useful remarks on this research; to Markus Ritter for helping me identify one of the poems written on one photograph; to Mina Zandi Siegel for translating a long poem written on one of the photographs selected for this article; to Parisa Damandan for letting me use photographs kept in her collection.
This article should be understood as a further step in my research on inscribed Iranian photographs, which was published in chapter two of Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 71–103.
- 2 Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 4.
- 3 For a more detailed argument on this classification, see Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 71–97.
- 4 For an extended study with various examples, see *ibid.*, 71–103.
- 5 For insight into this topic, see Diba, “Qajar Photography,” and Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 71–131, which presents various images (paintings and photographs) to show the propagation of royal Persian images from court painting to court photography.
- 6 For examples of miniatures and photographs that illustrate this argument, see Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 71–131.
- 7 Sane, *Shiraz*, 2.
- 8 Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 98.
- 9 For a detailed study including the inscriptions written on them, see Stead, *Ardabil Carpets*.
- 10 Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 98.
- 11 His name means Sacrifice.
- 12 Calm.
- 13 Effulgence.
- 14 Handsome.
- 15 Love-struck.
- 16 Eloquent.
- 17 See Pérez González, *Local Portraiture*, 257, fig. 58.

- 18 Sheikh, "National Identity," 249–274.
- 19 Pejhan, "Postcard View," 195.
- 20 Katouzian, "Poetry," 1.
- 21 For a detailed study of the iconography of Lady Justice, see Resnik/Curtis, "Representing Justice," 1–17.
- 22 For a detailed study of the blindness of Lady Justice, see *ibid.*, 62–90 and 91–105.
- 23 Translation in Sheikh, "National Identity," 460 n. 26. See another version of the image on the back of this postcard *ibid.*, 264.
- 24 Translation *ibid.*, 460 n. 26. See another version of this popular postcard *ibid.*, 262.
- 25 Fraser, *Persia and Turkey*, 57.
- 26 David Fraser wrote two other highly regarded books: *The Marches of Hindustan* (1907) and *The Short Cut to India* (1909).
- 27 Fraser, *Persia and Turkey*, 55–56.
- 28 Photograph published in Sheikh, "National Identity," 263.
- 29 Translation *ibid.*, 460, n. 24.
- 30 For this image, see Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 202, 210–211.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 209.
- 32 For a comparative analysis of some of the different versions of this famous photograph, as well as for the translation of the poem, see Eskandari-Qajar, "Portraits," 126–136.
- 33 Katouzian, "Poetry," 12.
- 34 Ritter, "Monumental Epigraphy," 19–37.
- 35 Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 101.
- 36 Porter, "Theory, Terminology, and Practice," 113.
- 37 Bürgel, *Symbolik des Islam*, 34–38.
- 38 Soucek, "Theory and Practice," 102.
- 39 For another photograph with the same inscription, see Pérez Gonzalez, *Local Portraiture*, 264, fig. 76.
- 40 Translation from Damandan, *Hoeltzer*, 154.
- 41 Translation by Just Jan Witkam.
- 42 Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, 69 (common on mosques), 73 (part of a limited repertoire of Koranic texts on buildings), 74 (Fatimid inscription on walls of Cairo), 80 (on a minaret in Tirmidh), 137 (inscription in wood in Beyshehir), 139 (on the Qala'un mosque in Cairo), 147 (on a walnut chest to contain a Koran), 156–57 (on tiles), 195–96, 213–21 (on diverse objects). I owe these references to Just Jan Witkam (e-mail correspondence with the author, March 3, 2008).
- 43 Witkam kindly made some remarks to me about his translation: He has not translated the words *Baha* and *Abha*, as these have specific meaning here; the words *Rabb zidni* are Qur'anic—*Rabb zidni 'ilman* (20:114)—, but the text here is different; and finally, the expression "the necklaces of carnelians and the chaplets of pearls" is often used for book titles.
- 44 Browne, *Amongst the Persians*, 512. Thanks are due to Witkam for providing me with the exact reference.
- 45 This being a paraphrase after Reza Sheikh.

THE GATE OF THE BOSPORUS: EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS OF ISTANBUL AND THE DOLMABAHÇE PALACE

During the nineteenth century, the development of photography as a new medium in the world and the construction of Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul (built 1843–1856) coincided with each other (fig. 1). From its construction to the early decades of the twentieth century, the palace appeared in the work of both traveller and local photographers. This presence is evidence of the building's significance, not only in the history of Ottoman architecture due to its formal and programmatic innovation but also in the history of photography due to the place of this medium in urban and imperial representation.¹

Recent scholarship on the relation between architecture and photography has emphasized that architectural representation entered a new, more multifaceted phase with the arrival of photography. Not only did photography change the media exposure of buildings; also reciprocal translations between the two media at various stages of design representation, construction, and post-construction had transformative effects on architectural forms. In addition to the multiple ways that architects regulated the public appearances of their buildings through the medium of photography, some also explored architectural analogies of photographic indexicality and spatial ambiguity.² Moreover, the Orientalist tradition of travel literature, as well as the Ottoman use of representation techniques, added further layers of complexity to photographs of Istanbul. Early photography in Istanbul was initially practiced by European travellers, local artists, minorities, and Turkish court and military photographers and was overseen by the Ottoman sultans who usually supervised the photographers' practices. This puts nineteenth-century photographs from Istanbul at the center of many debates, including the intermedia relationship between architecture and photography, European Orientalism, and ethnography, as well as minority politics, state control, and the inner tensions of the Ottoman Empire. The portrayal of Dolmabahçe Palace in nineteenth-century photographs is a case in point. This article will distinguish between three genres of Dolmabahçe's photographic visualization: portrayals of its gate; its interior; and its place in the urban context. While the first two contributed to mobilizing photography against Orientalist visual culture, the

third created a visualization paradigm that marked Istanbul as a panoramic city and informed its modern architecture.

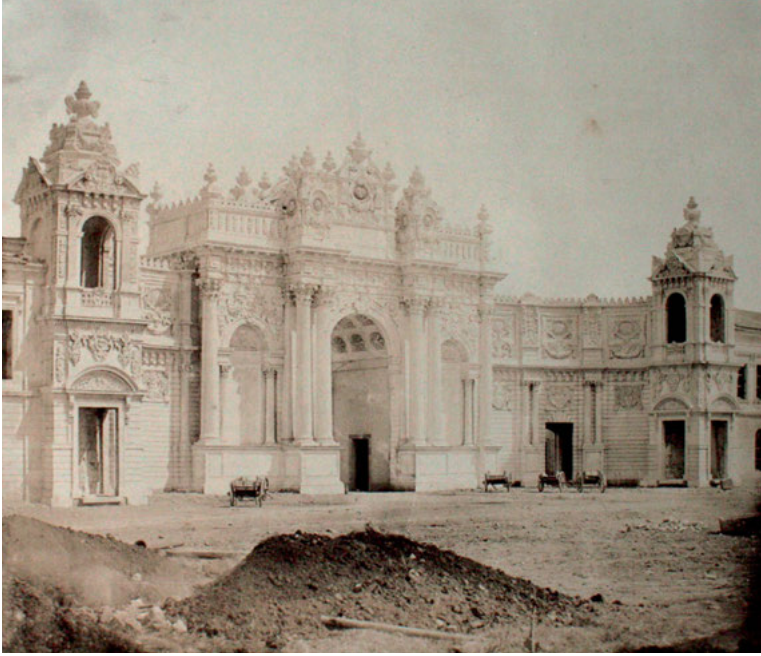
Unlike many other European artistic media, photography developed simultaneously in Europe and the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923). The news of a new technological device that could supposedly reproduce an exact image of reality was revealed in the Ottoman newspaper *Takvim-i vakai* as early as October 1839, the same year that François Arago (1786–1853) presented the new medium to the French Academy of Sciences. A student of Louis Daguerre (1787–1851) named Kompa (Compan?) reportedly took commercial photographs of passersby on Istanbul's streets.³ The new medium immediately attracted the attention of local individuals. After 1850, photography blossomed in the Ottoman Empire, taken up in its early years almost exclusively by Armenian and Orthodox Greek habitants and usually under the auspices of the sultan. In the mid- and late-1850s, large photography studios began to operate in Istanbul, the earliest opened by Basil Kargopoulo (c. 1850), James Robertson (ca. 1855), Pascal Sébah (1857), Abdullah Frères (1858), Guillaume Berggren (1870), and Gülmez Frères (1870), all of whom took the photographs of Dolmabahçe Palace. A map prepared by Engin Çizgen, which indicates the addresses of 30 photography studios on and around the Grand Rue of Pera, testifies that Istanbul's Pera region had indeed become a world center of photography during this period.⁴

Due to its perceived attachment to reality, one might expect that photography easily subverted nineteenth-century European Orientalist imagery that represented the "Orient" as an exotic, fanciful, and barbaric land. During the nineteenth century photography as a medium did not necessarily unmake Orientalism (in the Saidian sense), but it nevertheless complicated the relation between the imagination and "reality" in multiple ways. European photographers depicting the Near East shot staged studio photographs of exotic and seductive women, of fantastic sexual implications, and of naked Oriental dancers, some of which maintained the most stereotypical Orientalist imagery.⁵ Nonetheless, these photographers had an array of subjects, including cartes de visite for their customers, portraits of the royal family, architecture, and cityscape views, which made their relationship to Orientalism ambivalent. Commercial photography indeed catered to the aspirations of at least two groups: the European audiences whose curiosity about Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire was usually fulfilled by exotic images, and the Ottoman elite who sought prestige in adopting modern ways, including posing in front of the camera and buying photographs. Especially during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), photography reached new dimensions, not only due to the sheer number of photographs taken but also with the introduction of new subjects, techniques, audiences and uses for propaganda and surveillance.⁶ There are many documents in the Ottoman archives indicating the close supervision of the photographers' practices. European traveller-photographers were obliged to have court permission, and some were

escorted by the *zabit* (official forces) who reported back to the palace; Abdülhamid penalized photographers if he deemed them disloyal or unruly.⁷

Despite its seemingly apolitical character, architectural photography was also complicated by these forces. From 1850s on, the cityscape had become a favorite genre for almost all prominent nineteenth-century Ottoman photographers, who embarked on a project that was no less than a full inventory of the city. The sultan commissioned photographers to represent buildings and landscapes and distributed court orders to help have local photographers work on the shores of the Bosphorus. These photographers inherited a visual memory of Istanbul that had been constructed in travellers' guides and engravings. For instance, as Gilbert Beaugé has noted, Sébah & Joaillier's 1905 album *Fotoğraf görüntüleri koleksiyonları genel kataloğu* (The general catalogue of the photographic collections) literally illustrated Théophile Gautier's chapter on Istanbul. In the photographic album, there was not a single photograph that did not coincide with the writer's depictions of Istanbul.⁸ These photographs disseminated to a much larger audience a visual memory that had been constructed in earlier engravings. Yet they also transformed this visualization in ways that reflected not only the new medium's technical and artistic possibilities but also the local photographers' cultural values, which did not necessarily overlap with those of Orientalist painters, travellers, or writers. Elsewhere, I have suggested that the very act of photographing the city as a whole overturned, purposefully or not, the depictions of Istanbul as an exotic, unchanging, and non-modernizing city.⁹ The photographs of Dolmabahçe Palace in this context also have an added significance. Here was a new building to be photographed that had not been represented in earlier media. It was a new icon of the empire's modernization efforts and new state structure put in place through the Tanzimat Reforms (1839–1876).

Dolmabahçe Palace, designed and constructed when the Armenian architects Garabed Amira Balian (1800–1866) and later his son Nigoğos Balian (1826–1858) were the Imperial Palace Builders, was a turning point in Ottoman architecture.¹⁰ Following the return of the Ottoman court to Istanbul in 1703 after decades in Edirne, many transformations in architectural, urban and garden design were implemented. Moving toward the waters of the Bosphorus, rather than being confined to the historical peninsula or the Golden Horn, the Ottoman court elites sponsored extensively waterfront houses, public gardens, and pavilions, as well as urban squares around large fountains. Public gardens, such as Sad'abad, Küçüksu, and Kanlıca, allowed for people of different gender, age, and status to mix, which initiated new leisurely patterns. Due to this palatial patronage, Istanbul expanded to its outskirts, with small settlements rhythmically situated along the shores of the Bosphorus.¹¹ The move to the Bosphorus was soon reflected in the changing Ottoman palace architecture as well. The new courtly palaces built between 1850 and 1880 along or overlooking the Bosphorus—such as Dolmabahçe, Çırağan, and Yıldız Palaces—not only responded to the new pro-



— 1: James Robertson, Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace's Treasury Gate under construction, 1853.

grammatic requirements of the Tanzimat Reforms for a modernized state structure, but also created a monumental language of the late Ottoman period unlike the piecemeal composition of Topkapı Palace with its smaller pavilions, sloped roofs, integrated courts, and private gardens. Dolmabahçe Palace was designed as a large scale structure, composed of monumental facades, repetitive order, articulate entrances, column capitals, and ornamented surfaces, that stood in contrast to the existing urban fabric. It engaged in conversation with the historicist and eclectic developments in Europe at the time but nonetheless translated these formal tendencies onto Istanbul's unique site planning opportunities. For instance, situated along the Bosphorus, the palace accentuated linearity rather than central and hierarchical compositions along an axis of symmetry. The horizontally-stretched building secured panoramic views of the sea from the waterfront, and its long facade was interrupted with entrances both from the street and the waterside, including a triumphal-arch-like entrance that evoked the Napoleonic idea of imperial grandeur. The palace was still segmented in relation to a *harem* section for women, which was another requirement that differentiated it from its European counterparts.

It is possible to categorize early photographs of Dolmabahçe Palace into three genres. The first comprises photographs of its monumental imperial gate. Two of the earliest European photographers who visited Istanbul, Ernest de Caranza (1837–1863) and James Robertson (1813–1888), photographed the Dolmabahçe Palace's gate while under construction in 1852 and 1853. Both photographers' work immediately reached Europe. An engraving copy of Robertson's photograph of the Dolmabahçe Palace's Treasury Gate under construction was reproduced in European newspapers already in October 1853 (fig. 1). Robertson's first known album, *Photographic Views of Constantinople*, was published in London in December of the same year.¹² De Caranza exhibited his work in Brussels in 1856 and in Paris in 1857 (although Dolmabahçe Palace was excluded).¹³ Neither de Caranza nor Robertson operated outside the palace circles. De Caranza had presented his photographs to Sultan Abdülmecid I (r. 1839–1861), who named him *Saray Fotoğrafçısı* (court photographer) during his short stay there. Robertson, on the other hand, was not a quick passerby. In 1851, he had been awarded *Nişan-ı İftihar* (medal of distinction) by Sultan Abdülmecid, albeit not for his work as a photographer but for his participation in engraving designs for the new imperial mints. (He had visited Istanbul in 1841 and again in 1847, working in the Imperial Ottoman Mint until 1881.) Dolmabahçe Palace under construction must have been one of Robertson's earliest photographs after he took up this medium as a private occupation. Like many of his colleagues, Robertson opened a photography studio in the Grand Rue of Pera (today's İstiklal street) in Istanbul (in 1854 or 1856), which remained in operation until 1867. He is responsible for a few legendary photographic works, including the first panorama of Istanbul (c. 1855), which was interestingly taken from the Serasker (Beyazıt) Tower rather than the more popular Galata tower (fig. 2). He was also the cameraman behind the surviving photographs of the Crimean War, which stand as some of the earliest examples of war journalism.

As B. A. and H. K. Henisch have noted, Robertson usually resisted photographing the Ottoman Empire's modernization efforts and instead maintained the frozen image of the beautifully-aging older buildings, beloved by Orientalist travellers:

“Robertson's pictures belong to an older tradition, and offer no hint of change, or any wish for it. In its place, the modern camera reveals a timeless world, the marvels of the East, caught up in the kaleidoscope of western dreams. Robertson, the man of business, might pay lip service to the march of progress, but Robertson the photographer sensed that his viewers wanted pictures to be windows, opening out from the prose of life onto the playground of the imagination.”¹⁴

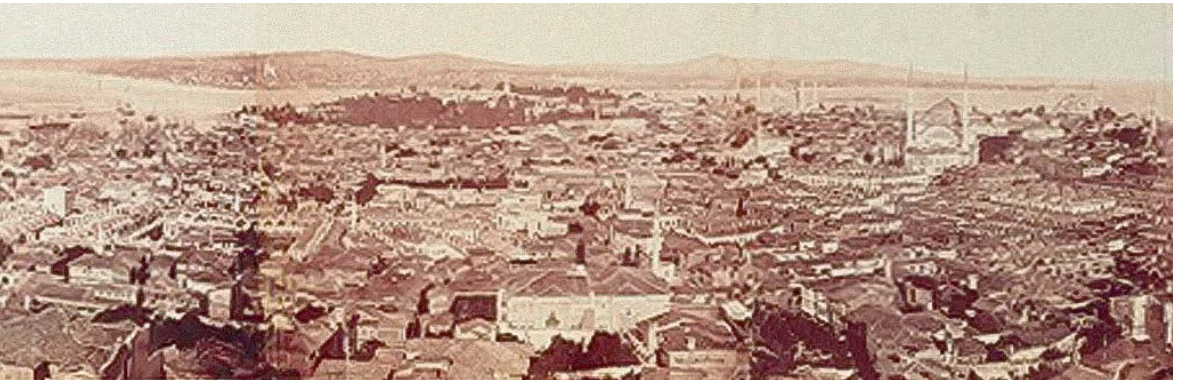
In his photographs of architecture, Robertson chose the well-known monuments of the historical peninsula and portrayed these buildings with a couple of men, whom he had staged to be still for the necessary camera exposure, sitting or leaning leisurely



in front of them. Nonetheless, Robertson's photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace under construction unavoidably suggests a transformation. Even though the gate as an architectural object is considerably complete in Robertson's photograph, the construction debris and unfinished details echo an air of novelty that did not contradict Sultan Abdülmecid's intentions.¹⁵ Nineteenth-century traveller photographs that usually reiterated an Orientalist image of the Near East for European markets could thus help disseminate the official Ottoman message about the empire's modernization projects.

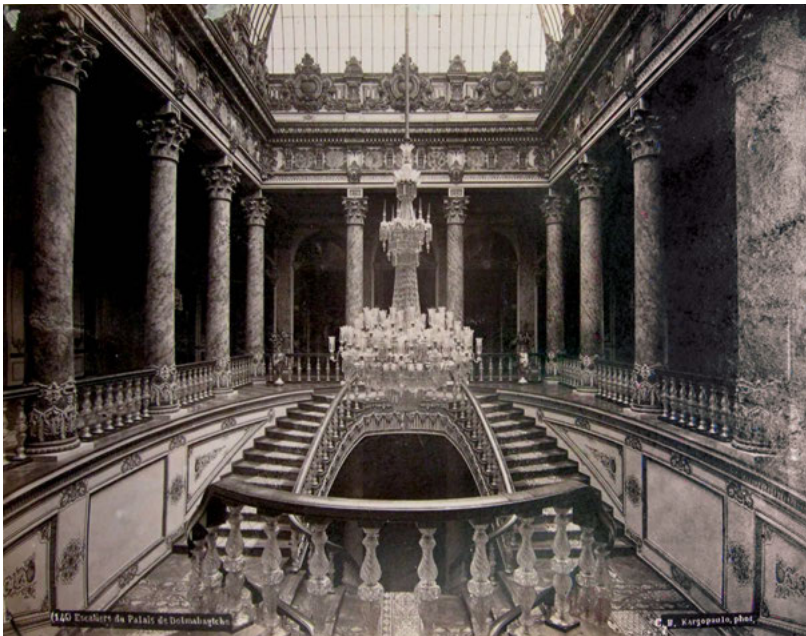
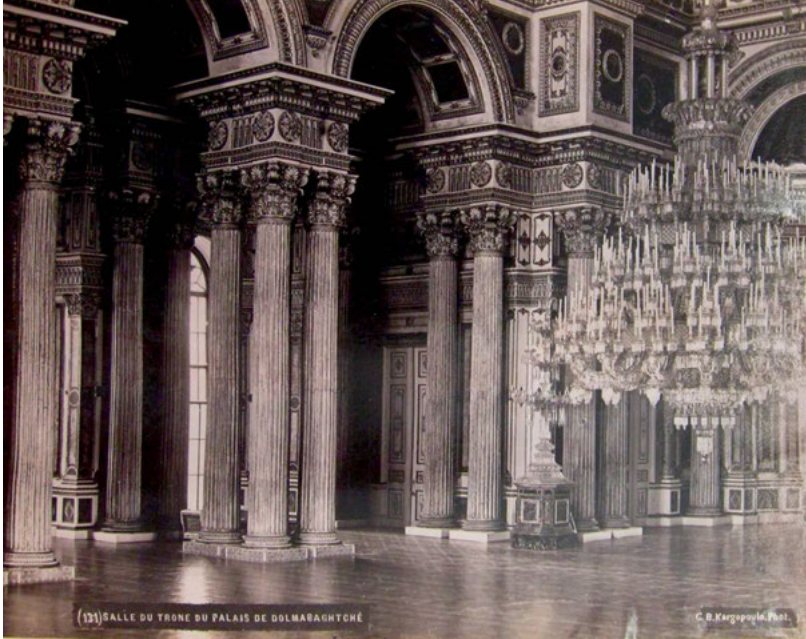
The prominent Ottoman photographers Pascal Sébah (1823–1886), Abdullah Frères, and Gülmez Frères also portrayed the Dolmabahçe Palace's Treasury Gate.¹⁶ Whether taken at a perpendicular or slightly acute angle, these photographs depict the palace standing in its symmetrical and monumental grandeur. In the common city albums, a photograph of the Dolmabahçe gate was often placed on the first or second page (after the Topkapı Gate), namely as the introduction to the city and a reference to the sultan's power. Its symbolic significance as the gate of power must have been so obvious that it appears as one of the few monuments in a French military album prepared during the French occupation after World War I (1914–1918) to celebrate the victory of the French army (c. 1918). This album contains group and individual photographs of French army officials, accompanied by a few panoramic views of Istanbul and photographs of Hagia Sophia, as well as the gate of Dolmabahçe Palace.¹⁷

The second genre of Dolmabahçe photographs is far less ubiquitous. Predictably, only a few photographers could pass the front gate and enter the palace to photograph its interior spaces. Abdülhamid favored Yıldız Palace, where he had his own photography studio, and shots of its magnificently glamorous interiors and exteriors



— 2: James Robertson, Panorama of Constantinople taken from Serasker Tower, 1857, Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal.

ubiquitously filled the pages of the 1893 albums that he sent as gifts to the British and American libraries.¹⁸ This resulted in relative ignorance of Dolmabahçe's interiors during the heights of photography in the nineteenth century. For these reasons, the interior photographs of Vassilaki (Basile) Kargopoulo (1826–1886), the official royal photographer of Abdülmecid II, and Gülmez Frères must have been rare documents of the palace in its earlier years. Kargopoulo photographed the great stairs inside the palace, the *Salle du trône* (ceremonial hall), and the hammam (titled *bain* [bath]) and its ornamented walls, probably in 1875 (figs. 3–4).¹⁹ Gülmez Frères portrayed the vestibule and the Ambassador Room (fig. 5).²⁰ Considering the common Orientalist paintings that fictitiously depicted the court elite's domestic spaces, usually as harem and hammam scenes, these interior photographs of the Dolmabahçe Palace promulgated quite different information about Ottoman domesticity. One cannot help but notice the lack of any human subjects in these photographs, in contrast to Orientalists' paintings that imagined lazy and corrupt ruling men watching over seductive, entertaining women in the harem and suggestive, erotic women in the hammam scenes. It was now the grand chandeliers, neoclassical columns with elaborate capitals, and ornamented wall surfaces that occupied the fore- and backgrounds of these photographs. Additionally, these photographs show how the Ottoman palaces were not radically different from their European counterparts, falsifying the Orientalist dialectic between "the West" and "the East." The photographs of the *Salle du trône* incorporated sufficiently-detailed views of the neoclassical columns to show how they were composed of the same main three parts as their European counterparts—pedestal, column, and entablature, which also had the same elements in similar proportions, such as the plinth and the torus, the base, the shaft and capital, the architrave, the



— 3: Vassilaki Kargopoulou, Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace's *Salle du Trône* (Ceremonial Room), c.1875, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Pierre de Gigord collection. — 4: Vassilaki Kargopoulou, Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace's Stairs, c.1875, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Pierre de Gigord collection.

frieze, and the cornice. The shaft of the columns had similar hollow fluting principles and diminution ratios from bottom to top, even though wall decorations and column capitals were translated versions distinct from their European counterparts (fig. 3).

In photographing the Grand Stairs, Kargopoulo made sure that the grand crystal chandelier was symmetrically placed in the foreground and that the glass ceiling was part of the frame (fig. 4). The glass ceiling was at the time an unmistakable sign of recent advanced technology and building materials in Europe. The Crystal Palace with its glass walls and ceilings had just been built near London in 1851, and the nineteenth-century arcades of Paris with their glass ceilings were becoming signs of technological advancement and modernity. To a careful eye, the partial inclusion of the glass ceiling in the photographic frame proved that the Ottoman Empire was up-to-date in regard to such technological inventions, thus discrediting its Orientalist image as a land where time stood still. These interior photographs were “architectural” in the sense that they represented the spatial, decorative, and surface qualities of Dolmabahçe Palace as a building, but by way of implication they nonetheless



— 5: Gülmez Frères, Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace's Ambassador Room, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Pierre de Gigord collection.

disseminated the image of a serious, hierarchical, technologically-advancing, powerful, ruling elite.

The first two genres regulated the public appearance of Ottoman imperial power through the medium of photography. Where the relationship between architecture and photography is concerned, these photographs participate in a building's media exposure during and after its construction. I would like now to turn attention to the third genre of Dolmabahçe's visualization, one that portrays the building within the context of the Bosphorus and its environs and in turn also had effects on future modern architectural forms in the Republic of Turkey. Let us take, for instance, Pascal Sébah's photograph entitled *Perspective du Palais du Dolmabahçe* (View of Dolmabahçe Palace), dated probably from 1868 and taken from the south-west in relative proximity to the palace itself (fig. 6).²¹ The photograph unambiguously places the building on the very edge of the water. The *kayık* (small wooden boat) and the larger boat in the foreground of the image, as well as the ones at a distance, underscore the presence of water in the composition. The chosen angle makes certain that the distant shore of the Asian side of the Bosphorus enters the frame so that the eye can cognitively complete the water in the picture as a protected section of sea rather than an open ocean. A photograph by Gülmez Frères repeats a very similar framing (ca. 1890).²² Yet another by the Sébah & Joaillier studio was taken at a distance from the Asian side of the Bosphorus (c. 1889) (fig. 7).²³ Even though the eye cannot miss the palace due to its monumental presence, the building is not positioned at the center of the vertical axis of this picture frame. With men walking or standing on an unfinished road in the foreground, the Bosphorus in between the two coasts and the hills behind, this photograph depicts Dolmabahçe Palace in its urban context—and the most memorable feature of this urban context is nothing but the Bosphorus itself. The studios of Abdullah Frères and Apollon (owned by Asıl Samancı, 1870–1942) took photographs of the palace with nothing but the water in the foreground (c. 1880 and 1920). A part of a boat that was accidentally or intentionally caught in both frames on the lower right corner is evidence that the pictures were taken from the sea itself, reproducing the experience of seeing the palace while sailing.²⁴ An image by the sultan's photographer Kargopoulo looks out to the Bosphorus through the garden gate rather than to the façade of the palace itself (c. 1875). A series of photographs taken from high up in the south-west marks Dolmabahçe Palace as nothing short of the gate of the Bosphorus. Each vantage point and frame is slightly different as the photographers seem to have favored two basic locations. Two photographs by Abdullah Frères taken from the hills behind the palace portray the building with the roofs of the palace's barracks in the foreground. One photograph is taken from a closer position and the other slightly from behind, but both depict the building in its urban context and include the Bosphorus and its Asian shore as a significant part of the composition (fig. 8).²⁶ Of the palace we can only see its side and a partial view of the street façade from this angle,



— 6: Pascal Sébah, *Perspective du Palais du Dolmabahçe*, Dolmabahçe Palace from the European side, c. 1885. — 7: Sébah & Joaillier photography studio, *Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace from the Asian side*, c. 1889.

which would be considered an unordinary or even an incorrect choice if the intention were to represent the monument. Usually monuments of power are depicted frontally in images emphasizing their symmetric, ordered, proportionate, grandiose façades (just as the palace's Treasury Gate was depicted in photographs). A second preferred location was the hills or the building roofs of Fındıklı. A memorable photograph by Guillaume Berggren (c. 1875) represents Dolmabahçe Palace in the urban fabric of Fındıklı, as the photographer himself noted in the title (fig. 9).²⁷ One can now see the palace and its Bosphorus façade unmistakably facing the adjacent water. The palace's ostentatious presence is diminished by the other monuments that enter the frame and create a spatial ambiguity, such as the Dolmabahçe mosque, a neighborhood minaret located right at the center of the frame in the foreground. The Bosphorus constitutes a triangle defined by the roofs of the urban fabric and the hills of the European side. Both Gülmez Frères and Sébah & Joaillier photographed variations of this composition from different roofs in the same neighborhood (c. 1890).²⁸

The photographic visualization of Dolmabahçe Palace in its urban context coincided with Istanbul's growth along the Bosphorus, securing the phenomenal status of this waterway along with the Golden Horn. Dolmabahçe Palace marked the threshold of the Bosphorus, competing with the canonic silhouette of the historical peninsula itself. Elsewhere, I have argued that these Bosphorus photographs and their albums made a significant contribution to the world history of photography and constructed a genre that can be named "panoramic city photograph." I use this concept not because these photographs were technically panoramas (two or more frames attached to each other), or necessarily because they were taken from above (some of them were not), but because they aided in the conceptualization of Istanbul as a panoramic city. Unlike a framed view which carefully calculates what is included and excluded from an image, a panoramic city photograph invites the viewer to imagine the extensions of the city beyond merely what is represented in the frame and to move the eye along and out of the photograph as if watching a moving image. These Bosphorus photographs and their albums participated in the collective identification of modern Istanbul as a panoramic city to be enjoyed with a moving eye.²⁹

Rather than only representing previously constructed buildings, I would also like to emphasize that these panoramic city photographs influenced the architectural forms of future buildings in at least two distinct ways. First, they carried the visual memory of Bosphorus houses, which the authors and architects of the early twentieth century embraced with a melancholic tone, precisely because this urban fabric was under threat during their time. This nostalgic appreciation of the "old Istanbul houses" mobilized a discourse around the "modern Turkish house," which proved to be an extremely influential architectural movement in Turkey throughout the twentieth century.³⁰ Second, the panoramic city photographs anticipated one of the most treasured daily activities, artistic expressions, and commodities of Istanbulites:



— 8: Abdullah Frères, Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace viewed from Fındıklı, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Pierre de Gigord collection.

— 9: Guillaume Berggren, Photograph of Dolmabahçe Palace viewed from Fındıklı, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Pierre de Gigord collection.



— 10: Sedad Eldem, Taşlık Coffee House, Istanbul, 1947–1948, photo: Suha Özkan.

Boğaza bakmak, manzarayı seyretmek, (looking at the Bosphorus and watching the view). European developments in modernism, such as horizontal windows and fully transparent facades that opened up a panoramic view, were therefore perceived as locally-appropriate architectural forms for Istanbul. Both aspects are exemplified, for instance, in the Taşlık Coffee House (1947–1948) (fig. 10) designed by the architect Sedad Eldem (1908–1988). Admittedly based on the Köprülü Amcazade Hüseyin Paşa waterfront house on the Bosphorus (c. 1700), this building is one of the most canonic examples of the “modern Turkish house” movement, advocated by Eldem as an appropriate hybridization of European modernism and the local vernacular. This building extends over a retaining wall with a large projecting bay and wide eaves. The T-plan composed of three identical bays was a recognizable element of traditional Istanbul houses, as memorialized in panoramic city photographs, and enabled maximum fenestration on a given span. Eldem made best use of this possibility by encircling all sides of the T-plan with continuous horizontal windows that let the light and a panoramic view of the Bosphorus inside. In his mind, this was a confirmation of the hints of modernism extant in the “old Turkish houses,” given the emphasis of the Swiss/French architect Le Corbusier on the horizontal window and the declaration of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright that his source of inspiration was the flat

prairie. According to Eldem, such qualities not only alluded to traditional houses but also made the new building compatible with European modernism. Rather than merely representing previously constructed buildings, in this way the panoramic city photographs were translated into new architectural forms.

NOTES

- 1 In addition to the works cited in the general bibliography, the following list names those archives that I have been using for the present contribution: Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey; Istanbul University, Istanbul. Library Collection, Abdülhamid albums, http://kutuphane.istanbul.edu.tr/?page_id=6462#; Library of Congress, Washington. "Abdulhamid II. Collection of Photographs of the Ottoman Empire," LC Control No: 2003652945.
- 2 See, for example, Zimmermann, *Photographic Architecture*.
- 3 Ölcner/Çizgen/Beauge/Neuville, *Images*, 64–65. See also Çizgen, *Photography*, 38.
- 4 Çizgen, *Photography*, 27.
- 5 For a further discussion of Orientalism (in the sense of Edward Said) in photography, see Perez, *Focus East*; and Behdad/Gartlan (eds.), *Photography's Orientalism*; Roberts, *Istanbul Exchanges*; Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed*; Çelik and Eldem, *Camera Ottomana*.
- 6 For more on photography during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, see the Abdülhamid albums in Istanbul University's Library Collection, http://kutuphane.istanbul.edu.tr/?page_id=6462 (last accessed: July 18, 2016); "Abdulhamid II Collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire," Library of Congress, LC Control No: 2003652945; Gavin (ed.), "Imperial Self Portrait," Ölcner/Çizgen/Beaugé/Neuville, *Images*; Micklewright 2000, 261–288; Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed*; and Akcan, "Off the Frame," 93–114.
- 7 For more information, see Akcan, "Off the Frame."
- 8 Ölcner/Çizgen/Beauge/Neuville, *Images*, 81.
- 9 For further discussion, see Akcan, "Off te Frame."
- 10 For recent literature on the topic, see Kuruyazıcı, *Batılaşan*; and Kaya, *Dolmabahçe*.
- 11 Hamadeh, *City's Pleasures*.
- 12 Öztuncay, *Robertson*; Henisch/Henisch, "Robertson."
- 13 Ölcner/Çizgen/Beauge/Neuville, *Images*, 64–65. See also Çizgen, *Photography*.
- 14 Henisch/Henisch, "Robertson."
- 15 For Sultan Abdülmecid's artistic endeavors, see Roberts, *Istanbul Exchanges*.
- 16 Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 4, 11, 12, 22, 35, 40; Canadian Centre for Architecture, Abdullah Frères Albums PH1981.0348.03; PH1984.0039.01.
- 17 "Corps d'Occupation Francais de Constantinople" Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 97D.
- 18 "Abdulhamid II. Collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire," Library of Congress, LC Control No: 2003652945.

- 19 Kargopoulo, Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 13. A11.V1.F12b, A11.V1.F13a, A11.V1.F13b, A11.V1.F14a, A11.V1.F14b.
- 20 Apollon (Asil Samancı), Photo Album with photographs by Gülmez Frères, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 22. A18.V1.F04a, A18.V1.F04b (although the photographs in the album were made by Gülmez Frères, Apollon later acquired the rights to them).
- 21 Pascal Sébah, Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 11. A4 F11.
- 22 Apollon (Asil Samancı), Photo Album with photographs by Gülmez Frères, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 22. A18.V1.F03a (although the photographs in the album were made by Gülmez Frères, Apollon later acquired the rights to them).
- 23 Özendes, *Orientalism*, 213.
- 24 Apollon (Asil Samancı), Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 40 A34.F16, A34.F17
Photograph of Abdullah Frères: *Photography in the Ottoman Empire*, 190.
- 25 Kargopoulo, Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 13. A11.V1.F02a.
- 26 Abdullah Frères, Photo Album, Canadian Centre for Architecture, PH1984.0039:026; Abdullah Frères, Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 12. A10.F10b.
- 27 Berggren, G. (Guillaume). Photo Album, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 15. A12.F21.
- 28 Apollon (Asil Samancı), Photo Album with photographs by Gülmez Frères, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 22, A18.V1.F03b; Sébah and Joaillier, Photo Albums, Getty Research Institute. Pierre de Gigord collection of photographs of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey 96.R.14 Box 26, A21.F09b; Box 92.
- 29 Akcan, "Off the Frame."
- 30 For explanation, see Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*, 101–145.

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- 3, 4: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Pierre de Gigord collection, Box 13.
- 5: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Pierre de Gigord collection, Box 22.
- 8: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Pierre de Gigord collection, Box 12.
- 9: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Pierre de Gigord collection, Box 15.
- 10: © Suha Özkan.

MARTINA BALEVA

THE HEROIC LENS: PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY OF
OTTOMAN INSURGENTS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY
BALKANS—TYPES AND USES

“In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am,
the one I want others to think I am.” (Roland Barthes)

In his essay on the constitutive role of photography in the construction of collective identities in nineteenth-century Romania, the photohistorian Adrian-Silvan Ionescu identifies a genre of photographic portraits as representations of “Bulgarian national heroes.”¹ Unfortunately, Ionescu leaves open the question of what exactly he means by this term, and he does not give a visual example of this photographic genre. Indeed, a large number of portrait photographs of Ottoman Bulgarians posed in a “heroic” manner exist, all made in the second half of the nineteenth century in Romanian photography studios. Many of them are today an integral part of the Bulgarian historical tradition, and they have become deeply imprinted onto the visual memories of generations as a testimony to and documentation of the Bulgarian national movement against Ottoman rule (c. 1396–1878). Not a single history book has failed to reproduce them, and they hang in every school and public building. Even the uniforms of the National Guard today are influenced by this photographic genre, which Ionescu would later accurately sum up as the “Bulgarian national hero.”

It is obvious that Ionescu did not derive the term from this particular “heroic” pictorial tradition but from another kind of photographic genre: “Oriental-type” photography. More exactly, Ionescu has very likely borrowed it from the title of a photograph taken by the famous Viennese photographer Ludwig Angerer (1827–1879) during the Crimean War (1853–1856), probably in Bucharest (fig. 1).² Designating a male portrait with the title “A Bulgarian national hero? Or a Turkish Bimbashi?” is both ambiguous and literally questionable. It seems that while creating his term, Ionescu did not know that the two ethnic attributions “Bulgarian” and “Turkish” could not be more disparate from a contemporary perspective. The essentialist historical narrative of the Ottoman era portrays the “Turk” as the ultimate enemy of the “Bulgarian” and the “Bulgarian national hero” as fighting against 500 years of oppression by the “Turkish Bimbashi.”³ Seen from today’s national perspective, the interchangeability



— 1: Ludwig Angerer, A Bulgarian national hero? Or a Turkish Bimbashi?, Bucharest (?), c. 1855, salt print, size unknown, Picture Archives of the Austrian National Library.

of two completely opposing, constituted national identities within the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923), as suggested in the caption of the portrait, can potentially provoke a knee jerk reaction or even be taken as an insult. At the same time, however, the title raises fundamental issues concerning an indigenous lens in the Ottoman Balkans: the possibilities of and limits to photographic categorization of the Ottoman imperial subject; the historical and cultural relocation as a result of terminological discrepancies between national attributions in photographic imagery; and most importantly, the self-defined and externally-determined visualization of identity through photography.

These issues mark the starting point of my reflections on local forms and social uses of portrait photography within insurgent circles in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Balkans. In contrast to the established field of research on photography in

the Ottoman Empire or on the official Ottoman imperial gaze, my reflections address a still relatively new area of research with a growing focus on the self-fashioning of identity in photography of the Ottoman world at large. When the issue of Ottoman identity is raised in photography, it normally involves the externally-defined constructions of “archetypes,” as were produced in photographs for European and foreign audiences⁴ or served as an apparatus of imperial rule. These “scenes and types” photographs show the individual as a passive object, serving solely as a vehicle for and bearer of particular ethnic, religious, or professional symbols. Featuring supposed or explicitly identifiable characteristics, type photographs from the Ottoman Empire were in particularly high demand as souvenir pictures for European tourists or collectors. Yet “type” photographs of ethnic tribes, in particular from the Middle East, or professional groups, such as bureaucrats, students, and military cadets, also served to consolidate imperial power, as evidenced in the large-scale photographic projects initiated by Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) to survey the modern Ottoman subject completely within his habitat.⁵ As Wolf-Dieter Lemke writes, for Sultan Abdülhamid II photography was not only an indicator of modernization but also a technology for “long-distance control,” enabling the center to reach through images to the uncontrolled peripheries.⁶ “Consequently,” as Stephen Sheehi writes, the official Ottoman lens “acted in its disciplinary capacity.”⁷

Subsequent research on the history of photography in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman world has contained little information about the private uses of this visual technology and individual photographic practices. Both Nancy Micklewright and Michelle L. Woodward were the first to approach this topic of visual self-representation and the subject’s own molding of his or her identity in Ottoman-era photography. They have examined the private practices involved in the individual development and active employment of photography in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul.⁸ Meanwhile, the widespread and intensive production of photographs for individual ends outside Istanbul, especially within several insurgent movements in the empire’s European provinces, remains relatively underexposed.⁹ This situation is in large part due to the fact that research on the history of photography in post-Ottoman successor states tends to be based on their respective national perspectives. Consequently, the common Ottoman origin of early photography in what is now Southeastern Europe or the Balkans has fallen out of focus. The national appropriation of photographic artifacts from the Ottoman era ultimately has prevented a comprehensive overview of the closely interwoven array of private photographic production across the region at that time.

This analysis attempts to provide at least a basic appraisal of what is still a minimally researched field. I have examined portrait photography of Greek, Albanian, Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian origin from the second half of nineteenth century in an attempt to explore the entangled and dynamic processes, in which

these former Ottoman subjects achieved a self-defined visualisation and group identity through photography. Here I will discuss some specific aspects that I consider symptomatic of the Ottoman context and that in historical terms can indeed be located in the dynamic, multiethnic field between the “Bulgarian national hero” and the “Turkish Bimbashi.”

TYPES

Bulgarian national hero? Or a Turkish Bimbashi? It is unlikely that the ethnic identity of the man in the photograph taken by Angerer will ever be determined. While he might have been Bulgarian or indeed Turkish, what is certain is that the man was neither a “Bulgarian national hero” nor a “Turkish bimbashi.” His “profession” can be identified, however, as the picture is very probably a “typical” representation of an irregular soldier, a *bashi-bazouk*.¹⁰ The clothing reform of 1829 required Ottoman “bimbashis” to wear western European-style uniforms that remained relatively unchanged up to the end of the Ottoman Empire. “Bulgarian national heroes,” however, went through several phases of sartorial development before they, likewise, adopted a western European military uniform in the 1870s.

The timing of the dress code reform of Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) was no accident. It came during the final phase of the decade-long Greek War of Independence (1821–1832). Donald Quataert notes: “More specifically, [the sultan’s] action came at the very moment when the success of the rebel Greeks was so gravely challenging his hold on non-Muslim Ottomans. At this crucial moment, he [Mahmud II] renegotiated Ottoman identity, stripping it of its religious component.”¹¹ Ottoman reform efforts did not prevent the Greeks’ struggle for nationhood, which resulted in the creation of an independent kingdom in 1832; rather, it became a model for other independence movements in the empire. Furthermore, it was the dress code of the Greek rebels that would inspire many imitators among the members of diverse ethnic groups in the Balkans.

The “Bulgarian national hero” experienced a rapid and simultaneously complex development from the Greek national costume to the military uniform. Within the course of just one decade, the appearance of Bulgarian insurgents underwent a remarkable transformation that produced essentially three types of clothing styles or dress codes, reflecting the wide spectrum of ethnic clothing in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. I have called them the *Albanian-Greek* type, the *Turkish-Montenegrin* type, and the *Hungarian-Romanian* type. Each of these three types of dress was also associated with particular characteristics that could be expressed in a suitably ostentatious manner through clothing, most notably in the form of photographic portraits. This transformational process of clothing also sheds light on the ideological evolution of the Bulgarian national movement.



____ 2: Oscar Kramer, Full-length portrait of Otto, King of Greece, Vienna, c. 1860, albumen carte-devisite, 8.8 × 5.4 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London. ____ 3: Pjetër Marubi, Full-length portrait of Hamzë Kazazi, c. 1858, place of creation, size, technique and holding institution unknown.

THE ALBANIAN-GREEK TYPE

The roots of the Albanian-Greek type of “Bulgarian national hero” can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, or more specifically, to the beginning of the Greek independence movement in the early 1820s. The Greek rebels—*klephtes* and *armatoloi*—dressed like Albanian mercenaries, who enjoyed an excellent military reputation and were admired for their bravery. Probably the oldest surviving, self-defined portrait in Albanian-Greek attire is that of the rebel Panagiotis Naum. The daguerreotype was taken by the Greek photographer Filippos Margaritis (1810–1892) in 1847–1848. It shows the Macedonian-born Greek in an oval, three-quarter, knee-length portrait with a waistcoat, the *fermeli*, and the Greek-style cap with tassel, the *farion*. Less visible but clearly identifiable is the pleated white skirt, the fustanella, which



— 4: Anastas Stojanović, Full-length portrait of Petar Mishaykov, Belgrade, date of creation unknown, albumen carte-de-visite, c. 9 × 5.5 cm, Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia.

would become a signature feature of the Greek independence movement and is today the central element of the uniform of the Greek Presidential Guard, the *Evzonoi*.

Margaritis also took a full-length portrait of the legendary independence war veteran Christodoulos Hatzipetros (1799–1869) in a fustanella, probably around 1855. The Greek declaration of independence led to Hatzipetros becoming the general and adjutant to the first monarch of Greece, Otto I (r. 1832–1862). As the second son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria (r. 1825–1848), who was known for his philhellenism, Otto I had his portrait taken in opulent Albanian dress with the fustanella even during his exile in Vienna (fig. 2). These later versions of the Albanian costume are, as John Stathos states, “of course, highly formalised versions of what the average klepht would have worn in the 1820s.”¹²

Symbolizing male courage and national pride, the fustanella was especially popular among young men who were not themselves involved in the fight for independence, but who would gladly pose for the camera in a heroic manner. Many were in fact following the example of the first Greek monarch, Otto I, who had introduced the costume to his court shortly after his enthronement and had also made it the basis of the uniform for the Evzones.¹³ The exaggerated deployment of the fustanella, which originally served as a visible symbol of masculinity and heroism, eventually reduced it to a mere cliché. British contemporary historian and Philhellene George Finlay remarked: “It became then not uncommon, in Greece and Macedonia, to see the children of the proudest Osmanlis dressed in the fustanella, or white kilt.”¹⁴

The Albanian-Greek fustanella, however, enthralled men of all ethnic backgrounds across the empire. In 1858 Hamzë Kazazi (1799–1859), one of the first Albanian rebels and the instigator of an uprising in the Albanian city of Shkodër in 1835, had himself photographed by Pjetër Marubi (1834–1903) in the dress of Greek revolutionaries (fig. 3), although posthumous attempts to portray him as a fighter for independence border on the comical.¹⁵ However, Bulgarian guerrillas were likewise eager to dress in the heroic attire of the Greeks. Two portraits of the legendary Bulgarian Hajduck Ilyo Voyvoda (1805–1898), taken by the Serbian court photographer Anastas Stojanović in Belgrade in 1867, show him in the pleated skirt. Other Bulgarian men also had their portraits taken at Stojanović’s studio and likewise in the fustanella. While not necessarily fighters for independence, they would dedicate their portraits to a friend or mistress, as is the case in the full-body portrait of Petar Mishaykov (fig. 4).¹⁶

THE TURKISH-MONTENEGRIN TYPE

The Turkish-Montenegrin dress code of the “Bulgarian national hero” appears to have evolved parallel to the Greek-Albanian type. The equal standing enjoyed by both clothing styles and the mutual reinforcement of their ideological significance are illustrated by the double portrait of the two famous Bulgarian guerrillas (slav. *vojvodes*) Vidul Stranski (1840–1878) and Stefan Karadzha (1848–1868), which was taken by Stojanović in Belgrade, probably in 1867 (fig. 5). In addition to the fustanella and the Greek cap with tassel familiar from the photographic portraits of Greek rebels, however, Stranski is wearing not an “Albanian” but a Montenegrin jacket called the *toke*.¹⁷ It can be identified by the ample decoration on the chest, which is richly adorned with metal plates. Instead of the pleated white skirt, Karadzha is wearing the richly adorned “Turkish” pantaloons combined with a Montenegrin jacket and a likewise Montenegrin fur cap with tassel.

The “Turkish” style of dress appears to have taken inspiration from the uniform of the bodyguard or *cavas* (even if, like the *bashi-bazouk*, they had no particular ethnic



— 5: Anastas Stojanović, Double portrait of Vidul Stranski and Stefan Karadzha, Belgrade, c. 1867, albumen carte-de-visite, c. 9 × 5.5 cm, Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia.

origin). This uniform is seen repeatedly in photographic portraits of “typical” professional groups. Many photographic series of Ottoman ethnic types addressed to European tourists construed the *cavas* as a separate category of virile Turk. Most people in the profession were from the local population in Anatolia and the Middle East, although also in the capital, the latter case being recruited by European diplomats as bodyguards, escorts, or security guards. The dress code of the *cavas* symbolized the right to bear arms as exclusive to Muslims, which at the same time is likely to have been associated with power and authority.

There are manifold examples of photographs of Bulgarian men dressed up as Turkish guards. In Belgrade in 1867, Vassil Levski (1837–1873), the quintessential Bulgarian national hero, posed in Turkish attire for a photograph (fig. 6). The only detail that distinguished him as not being “Turkish” was the fur cap, the *kalpak*—today’s national symbol of the Bulgarian rebel against Ottoman rule. Even for not so popular



— 6: Anastas Stojanović, Full-length portrait of Vassil Levski, Belgrade, c. 1867, albumen carte-devisite, c. 9 × 5.5 cm, Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia.

“Bulgarian national heroes,” dressing up as a *cavas* was a very popular practice. Unlike the *fustanella*, the attire of the “Turkish” *cavas* was a sign of respect for the power and authority of the wearer.

The influence of Montenegrin dress, meanwhile, can be traced back to the Serbian uprisings against the Ottoman central government which had taken place from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In similar fashion as the Greek rebels in Albanian attire, an array of high-profile Serbian nationalist activists, intellectuals, and literati had their pictures taken in Montenegrin dress. Ever since Montenegrins played a strategic role in the Serbs’ struggle against Ottoman sovereignty, their clothing stood for the freedom and independence of the supposedly indomitable inhabitants of the “Black Mountains.”¹⁸ Anastas Jovanović (1817–1899), the first Serbian photographer, produced a pantheon of portraits of Serbian national heroes all wearing Montenegrin clothing. Jovanović later worked with his Bulgarian colleague Stojanović



— 7: Anastas Jovanović, half-length Portrait of Lyubomir Nenadović, Belgrade, c. 1855, calotype, size and holding institution unknown.

who documented the most “Bulgarian national heroes.” The famous portrait of Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (1813–1851), Prince-Bishop of Montenegro, national poet, and philosopher, survives as a talbotype or calotype (taken in 1848 or 1851) and shows the earnest-looking man with the Montenegrin waistcoat and cap as later worn by Karadzha. Njegoš made the flat red cap fashionable in polite society and helped it to become the Montenegrin national symbol. This series of portraits also includes that of Serbian national poet Ljubomir Nenadović (1826–1895), heavily armed and posing like an irregular mercenary with the Montenegrin tok (fig. 7). Nenadović has his right hand on a hilt, with his left hand drawing attention to the Montenegrin cap.¹⁹ His portrait is remarkably reminiscent of the poses by Stranski and other Bulgarians with the Montenegrin tok. Milorad Medaković (1824–1897), Serbian historian and

diplomat, biographer, and personal secretary to Njegoš, likewise had his portrait taken in Montenegrin dress. Instead of the flat, round Montenegrin cap, he wears the distinctive fur cap with tassel, as familiar from the portrait of Karadzha.

THE HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN TYPE

The first appearance of the Hungarian-Romanian uniform style, the precursor to the uniforms worn by today's Bulgarian National Guard, can be found in photographic portraits of Bulgarian insurgents taken in the Romanian capital of Bucharest. To the best of my knowledge, the man credited with founding this clothing tradition which would inspire an unprecedented wave of imitation is the emblematic Bulgarian national hero Vasil Levski. After posing in Belgrade as a "Turkish" cavas, Levski had his photo-



— 8: Carol Pop de Szathmari, Full-body portrait of Vasil Levski, Bucharest, c. 1870, albumin cabinet card, size unknown, National State Archives, Sofia.

graph taken in Bucharest by the Romanian court photographer Carol Popp de Szathmári (1812–1887), probably some years later around 1870. His uniform is a Hungarian-style imitation of the Imperial and Royal Hussars regimentals (fig. 8). The white uniform with dark attachments on the collar and sleeves, as well as the lacing on the chest, sleeves, and trousers, is complemented by leather boots, a hussar fur cap adorned with a feather resting on the balustrade, and the rifle leaning demonstratively against it.²⁰

The same uniform as seen in Levski's photograph was also featured—albeit with varying attributes and backdrops, and less authentic looking—in portraits for other, lesser-known Bulgarians, such as Branislav Veleshki (1834–1919), also photographed by Szathmári.²¹ Veleshki posed in the same hussar-style uniform, but as an infantryman in full dress with a haversack, while donning the traditional peasant footwear in the Balkan region, the *opanci*, and standing in front of a painted out-of-place English style landscape as a backdrop and a balustrade.

USES

The decision of Levski, Veleshki, and many other Bulgarian emigrants to visit Szathmári's photography studio does not appear to have been a coincidence. Romanian Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza I (r. 1862–1866) had been there previously for a portrait, and he also dressed in a Hungarian hussar regimental costume (fig. 9). He appears to have been the model for many Bulgarian emigrants in Romania. Cuza I's likeness was most likely distributed among the population in the form of inexpensive *carte de visite* portraits, both to boost his popularity and political standing and to promote a developing Romanian national identity. Following the example of the French emperor Napoleon III (r. 1852–1870), who in 1859 was photographed in a civilian suit by the inventor of the *carte de visite*, André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819–1889), Cuza I also presented himself in a ceremonious fashion but nevertheless as a man of the people.

Cuza I came to power in 1862, following the merger of two Ottoman vassal principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, to form the United Romanian Principalities. Romania remained under the nominal sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Cuza I and would remain semi-autonomous until the declaration of independence in 1878. Nevertheless, Bulgarian separatists saw the newly-created state as a model that not only embodied the ideal of the progressive, European nation state but also one with which they could relate due to its Ottoman background. With his assumed hussar-style, Cuza I stood for the ideal of the independent nation state, the latter's enlightened citizens, and a disciplined army that would wage organized war in defense of the independent state.

The ideologue of the Bulgarian national movement, Levski, had evidently recognized the advantages of a European-style appearance among radical nationalists. The



— 9: Carol Pop de Szathmari, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza I, Bucharest, c. 1861, 6.3 × 10.4 cm, Photo Archives of the National Library of Romania, Bucharest.

idea was to replace the old-fashioned stance and appearance of rebels associated with what Edward Said deconstructed as the image of “Oriental”²² backwardness and brute force as seen in Western Europe with a modern and enlightened image. It triggered a widespread fashion trend among Ottoman Bulgarian migrants in Romania and later in Serbia, as witnessed by countless portraits featuring hussar-style dress. The result was a range of uniformed photographic portraits created in the 1870s which provided the basis for the uniform of the Bulgarian National Guard. These portrait series offer insights into the preferences and the self-conceptions, ambitions, and agendas of an entire social group. If one thinks of Pierre Bourdieu’s thesis regarding the social uses of photography, then the series of photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes” garbed in uniforms constitutes a veritable “sociogram”²³ of an entire milieu, together with the visual culture that created it.

CARTES DE VISITE

The photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes” are all *carte de visite* portraits. The original images have the same modest dimensions, on average 9×5.5 centimeters, and are mounted on cardboard that measure 10×6.5 centimeters. Disdéri, who patented the *carte de visite* in Paris in 1854, found a way of creating eight images on a single plate, thereby drastically reducing the cost of purchasing more than one photograph. This photographic technique is to thank for the rise in the visibility of the common man and the common woman.

This invention, referred to either pejoratively as a “proletarian form of portraiture”²⁴ or more positively as a symbol of democracy,²⁵ triggered a momentous mass phenomenon known as “cardomania,”²⁶ across Europe, then North America, and globally. The influence of cardomania crossed social, cultural, and linguistic borders. Napoleon III, African-American slaves in the United States, and insurgents in the Ottoman Balkans all sooner or later found their way into the ateliers of photographers and thereby became part of the massive and entirely new business of photographing human subjects.²⁷ This historically novel method of seeing oneself in photographs had far-reaching consequences for culture and a decisive influence on our concept of historical images.²⁸

The standardized format of the *carte de visite* photograph made the rationalized and optimized production of portraits possible, and the standardized poses and accouterments of the photographic portrait had a homogenizing effect on the social circles in which they circulated. The innumerable portraits articulated a unified formula of depiction that was rapidly becoming institutionalized, regardless of place. This is why *carte de visite* photographs from all over the world are so strikingly similar that they can be easily confused. Apart from minor dissimilarities in national motifs, clothing, or symbols, *carte de visite* portraits from even the most far-flung regions of the world hardly differ from one another. It is not by chance that the invention of the *carte de visite* photograph and its rapid spread coincided with the rise of national movements. Deborah Poole has drawn parallels between the market for *carte de visite* portraits as a part of visual capitalism and the role of “print capitalism” as referred to by Benedict Anderson, who characterizes print media as the motor of national ideology.²⁹ According to Poole, the market in *carte de visite* images strengthened a sense of community among the middle classes and their identity of “sameness” all over the world, from the bourgeoisie of large urban centers to the ambitious merchants of the provinces and the upper and middle classes of the colonies.³⁰ She writes, “The worldwide rush to purchase *carte-de-visite* photographs ... reflects the extent to which these small, circulating images of self answered the shared desires and sentiments of what was rapidly emerging as a global class.”³¹

FUNCTIONS

We do know, however, that *carte de visite* portraits should be understood as pictorial expressions and indeed assertions of a certain social prestige that the person depicted had achieved, or at least, so the portrayal would suggest. The most visible sign of this prestige in the petty bourgeois circles of the cities in the European territories of the Ottoman Empire was the uniform. Especially “foreign” uniforms gave the Ottoman subjects an air of importance, and they ensured that the people wearing them would be admired, attracting the gaze of the viewer with their shimmer. Zahari Stoyanov (1850–1889), the first chronicler of the Bulgarian uprisings, offers a lovely description of the enchanting charm of even the simplest school uniform: “The heroes of the day were the people who returned from the School of Medicine in Bucharest or Constantinople, or the School of Commerce in Vienna, or any kind of school that had a uniform, two or three gold buttons, a cap with flourishes.”³² A uniform was a clear sign of success and social advancement. The uniform filled the person who wore it with pride, affiliating him with the state and winning him the respect of others. It was a symbol of power and a forward-looking attitude, a sign of a “new era [and a new] time, in which even a Bulgarian carries a saber.”³³ The photographic portrait was the perfect representational form for the vision of a subject of the Ottoman Empire who sought to portray himself as a modern man. It provided a visual delineation of this masculine fantasy, and because of the apparent reliability of the photograph as a documentary image, invested it with authenticity.

FACEBOOK INSURGENCY

Carte de visite portraits represented an important implement in modern communication and social networking. The relatively inexpensive photographs were referred to as *cartes de visite* for a reason. They served as useful tools when people sought to present themselves and to establish their places in various social contexts and hierarchies. In addition to this practical use, they also had what could be referred to as exchange value. Fitting easily into someone’s pocket, *carte de visite* portraits were predestined to be exchanged, and they thereby acquired an important social function and an equally important role in the expression and communication of status.

These portraits circulated through a wide array of channels. They were sent by mail, exchanged personally, given as gifts, and even collected. People used them to introduce themselves, to court a beloved, or to dedicate to friends. The circulation of portraits guaranteed recognition and membership in certain social circles and groups. The *carte de visite* rapidly became a meaningful social medium, without which one

could hardly hope to participate in the social life of the time. It was a precursor to the social networking tool of our time, the Facebook of the nineteenth century.

In addition to their function as representations of uniformed masculinity, the portraits of the “Bulgarian national heroes” possess significance as a medium of communication that should not be underestimated. This fact is indicated by the dedications on the backs of the portraits. Like many of his contemporaries, Toma Kardzhiev (1850–1887), a teacher and organizer of a local revolutionary committee, wrote a dedication on his portrait (fig. 10) to Dimitar Gorov, a Bulgarian entrepreneur in Romania and a patron of radical Bulgarian national circles: “To my friend D. Gorov as a sign of *truthfulness* [emphasis mine]” (fig. 11). From the perspective of elegance and imagination, Kardzhiev’s portrait could have hardly been outdone. He is garbed in a hussar’s uniform with a saber and gun, standing on a checkered rug in front of a neutral background. The dedication is dated May 14, 1876, just days after the bloody suppression of the April Uprising, in which Kardzhiev participated only indirectly, supplying the armed units with money, weapons, and so forth.

The function of the portraits of “Bulgarian national heroes” was certainly by no means limited to their role as a medium of access to the social network of radical nationalistic circles or as a tool in the maintenance of ties to those who shared their ideals. The portraits were clearly central components in the logistics of insurgency. The circulation of the portraits went far beyond the private sphere or the narrow social network. As Poole observes, “As a form of social currency [...] the *carte-de-visite* circulated through channels much broader than the immediate network of friends and acquaintances.”³⁴

The photographs of “Bulgarian national heroes” were intended to saturate all layers of society with the ideology that they embodied in a manner that was entirely new at the time. Levski, who had considerable experience in the art of self-invention through photography, recognized the potential of the *carte de visite* portrait, which could be easily and inexpensively reproduced, to kindle agitation. He used the *carte de visite* portrait to attract and to recruit comrades in arms. In his letters, he instructed his fellows to have portraits of him wearing a “legionnaire” uniform circulated among the people.³⁵ Clearly he assumed that the depictions of “Bulgarian national heroes” could convince the everyday “man on the street” to join the armed uprising. Finally, the *carte de visite* enabled the national revolutionaries to widen their spheres of influence and to extend the revolutionary network beyond cultural, social, and linguistic borders.

Once set in motion, the circulation of the portraits of the “Bulgarian national heroes” did not necessarily prompt the observer to take action, but it did prompt many observers to follow suit. This explains the striking rise in the number of photographic portraits that were taken in the widest array of military uniforms, photographs that are stored by the hundreds in Bulgarian archives. Paraphrasing Roland



____ 10: Babet Engels, Full-length portrait of Toma Kardzhiev, Bucharest, 1876 (?), albumen carte-devisite, 10.5 × 6.5 cm, Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia. ____ 11: Back side of Figure 10.

Barthes, the photograph invests the subject depicted in a military uniform with at least a metaphorical existence as a “Bulgarian national hero.”³⁶ And it was the uniform that allowed the historical portraits to become part of historiography, and through historiography, they became part of culture, immortalized one more time in photograph albums, but this time as “genuine” heroes.³⁷ In the end, the iconographic and aesthetic similarities of the portraits—the ubiquitous poses and uniforms—created a welcomed occasion for historiography to craft a homogenous collective image that today creates the impression of a self-contained, unified military movement for national liberation.

NOTES

- 1 Ionescu, "Fotografie und Folklore," 47.
- 2 The portrait belongs to a series of different ethnicities and/or professional types taken by Angerer in what is today Romania during the Crimean War. The entire series is kept in the Picture Archives of the Austrian National Library and is available digitized at: http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/Search/Result.aspx?p_ItemID=2 (last accessed: February 6, 2017). See Holzer, "Im Schatten," on how the photographic series was created. Unfortunately, Holzer does not address this photograph or its title.
- 3 "Bimbaşı" means Ottoman Turkish *binbaşı* (colonel), i.e., literally "head (baş)" of "thousand (bin)."
- 4 The majority of studies on photography in the Ottoman era have concentrated on representations of the "Other" produced by either non-indigenous photographers or by local ones who satisfied the demand of the western European gaze. See, for example, Behdad/Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism*; Micklewright, "Orientalism and Photography;" and Özendes, *Orientalism*.
- 5 A special selection of photographs from this imperial photograph archive project for western European audiences is known as the "Abdülhamid II Collection," which is held in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and in the British Library, London. Entirely digitized, the albums of the Library of Congress can be found under <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ahii/> (last accessed: January 8, 2017). A first overview was edited by Gavin (ed.), *Imperial Self Portrait*. For an aesthetic analysis, see Shaw, "Ottoman Photography;" and Micklewright, "In the Service." On particular aspects of the collection as the representation of "students," see Harper, "School Portraits."
- 6 Lemke, "Ottoman Photography," 238.
- 7 Sheehi, "Social History," 177.
- 8 Micklewright, "Late Ottoman Photography;" Micklewright, "Photographs and Consumption;" and Woodward, "Photographic Practice."
- 9 The history of indigenous photography in Anatolia has also remained little investigated. On the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, see Sheehi, *Arab Imago*, and Sheehi, "Portrait Paths."
- 10 In response to my e-mail to Peter Prokop, head of the Picture Archives of the Austrian National Library, asking whether the title was created by Angerer himself or had been added later, I was informed that "the so-called title was penciled in beneath the photograph by somebody or other; I would say it is clearly a later interpretation. It would be interesting to know who the subject really is." Peter Prokop, e-mail correspondence with the author, December 5, 2013. At this point I would like to thank Peter Prokop for his valuable insights and other help.
- 11 Quataert, "Clothing Laws," 413.
- 12 Stathatos, "Frock Coat."
- 13 Ibid. The female equivalent of this "Greek" national costume was invented by the wife of the prince, Amalia (1818–1875), hence the name "Amalia" dress. It was based on the male version, including the tasseled hat (gr. *kalpaki*) and jacket covered in gold embroidery.
- 14 Finlay, *History of Greece*, VI, 39.

- 15 Greeks and Albanians still argue bitterly over heritage claims to the fustanella. See, for example, the discussion platform: <http://arbenia.forumotion.com/t18-fustanella> (last accessed: March 5, 2017).
- 16 On the back of his portrait, Petar Mishaykov wrote: "As a souvenir for Miss Magdalena Stanković from Petar Mishaykov."
- 17 *Toke* are large silver plates, which may be attached to the front of the *jelek* (jacket). These plates were very expensive, so only clan chiefs and other important individuals were able to wear them.
- 18 On the pictorial creation of the Montenegrin archetype in the nineteenth century, see Baleva, *Bulgarien im Bild*.
- 19 Ljubomir Nenadović (1826–1895) also posed later for the camera in the *toke* with cap in hand and heavily armed. Photographer, location and date are unknown. A digitized image can be found at: http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/istorija/cg_u_xix_vijeku/sazdanje_crnogorske_nacionalne_drzave6_b_pavicevic.htm (last accessed: March 5, 2017).
- 20 Both among historians and in the popular imagination, Levski's uniform is seen as that of the Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade from 1862. Krumka Sharova, one of the most renowned scholars on the biography of Levski, designated the picture as "Vassil Levski in the so-called uniform of the First Bulgarian Legion, Bucharest, 1868–1869" (my italics). In a footnote on the picture's title, she nevertheless added: "As such the uniform is of Hungarian design and probably a prop from Szathmari's studio." See Sharova et al. (eds.), *Vassil Levski*, I, 658, document number 250.
- 21 Carol Pop de Szathmári: Full-length portrait of Branislav Veleshki, Bucharest, undated, albumen carte de visite (10.5 × 6 cm), Photograph Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia, Signature НБКМ-БИА С 14. The dating of the photograph to 1862, as specified in the Photograph Archives of the National Library, is more than dubious.
- 22 See Said, *Orientalism*.
- 23 Bourdieu, "Culte," 43. The term goes back to Jacob L. Moreno and describes the visual representation of "the position of each individual within his group as well as the inter-relations of all other individuals as these are affected by attractions and repulsions" (Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?*, 26). In other words, a sociogram shows the structure of interpersonal relations in a social group.
- 24 McCauley, *Disdéri*, 30.
- 25 Freund, *Photographie*.
- 26 Gernsheim, *Geschichte*, ch. 24: "Das Visitenkartenporträt," 355–368. Gernsheim writes of a "carte-de-visite fever" and a "carte-mania," 358, 360.
- 27 In larger photograph ateliers of European cities, the average number of cartes de visite produced over the course of six months added up to half a million. See the statistical data, *ibid.*, 361.
- 28 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 12. According to Barthes, inexpensive portrait photography led to a disturbance of civilization.
- 29 Poole, *Vision*, 112; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, see ch. 2 on "Cultural Roots."
- 30 Poole, *Vision*, 112.
- 31 *Ibid.*

- 32 Stoyanov, *Botyov*, 8.
- 33 Ibid., 9.
- 34 Poole, *Vision*, 112.
- 35 According to the founder of the digital photograph archives “Lostbulgaria” (<http://www.lostbulgaria.com/>); Kolev, “Mustacite.”
- 36 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 11.
- 37 Compare *ibid.*, 16. Barthes regards any picture that has been included in illustrated books or magazines as having passed through the filter of culture.

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- 1: Picture Archives of the Austrian National Library, Pk 4400, 12.
- 2: Photographs Collection, NPG x74416, © National Portrait Gallery, London.
- 3: www.archivio.internazionale.it/all'ombra-di-ghisland (last accened: February 2, 2015).
- 4: Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia, НБКМ-БИА С 565.
- 5: Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia, НБКМ-БИА С 2090.
- 6: Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia, НБКМ-БИА С 653.
- 7: Debeljković, *Stara srpska fotografija / Old Serbian Photography*.
- 8: National State Archives, Sofia, III 291. Photo from the original by Hristo Yonkov.
- 9: Photo Archives of the National Library of Romania, Bucharest, 934.
- 10, 11: Photo Archives of the National Library SS. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia, НБКМ-БИА С 99.

STEPHEN SHEEHI

GLASS PLATES AND KODAK CAMERAS:

ARAB AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE “ERA OF FILM”

Soon after its invention, Onig Diradorian imported the Kodak camera to the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923) in 1888. With it, the age of Kodak’s slogan “You press the button, we do the rest” began in the Middle East. By the turn of the twentieth century, Eastman Kodak had sold over 100,000 cameras, employing more than 200 salesmen worldwide. The Rochester, New York-based company grew exponentially, buying out competitors and companies in ancillary industries, such as the American Camera Company, Blair Company, and the Aristo and Nepera paper companies. Eastman Photographic Materials, based in Soho, London, opened in 1885 to handle international sales. In 1898, Eastman Photographic Materials in London and Eastman Kodak Company were consolidated into the multinational Kodak Ltd.¹ The original Kodak camera, and later the Brownie, ensured mass, or at least middle-class, access to photography. Its availability, ease, and mobility fastened this new bourgeois individual tightly to commodity culture and the private sphere that represented the “new” men and women of the era.

Will Staff’s entry on “Egypt and Palestine” in the *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography* is amiss, however, in asserting that the number of professional photographic studios, assumedly in Cairo, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Haifa, declined in 1880 due to the introduction of the Kodak.² This assertion is patently incorrect. The photography studios in Beirut, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Cairo, and Alexandria, not to mention also in Baghdad and Aleppo, flourished for decades side-by-side with the ever-increasing use of various versions of the portable camera (and later, the invention of the 35 mm camera by Leica, then Contax, and the Kodak Retina). More interestingly, alongside the studio, articles, discussions, and commentaries in Arabic printed journals show that amateur photography seems to have been popular among a particular segment of the rising *effendiyah*, or Arab middle class. With the vibrant practices of amateur photography, the Kodak camera and its use of pre-made film rolls, which were processed in the United States and England, raise questions about our understanding of indigenously-produced photographs as “sensual and creative artifacts” but also as fulcrums on which to investigate the “nature of photography” in the Middle East.³ Notably, did the popularity of amateur photography—including the later

use of the Kodak—disturb or entrench the stability of the photography studio portrait? Did it secure the professionally-produced photograph's legibility and *truth-value*? Or did it, or did amateur photography in general, crack the hegemonic transparency of the photograph's surface by providing a value to photography that it previously did not have? As a practice within amateur photography, did it add a radical subjective *experience* denied in the contrivances of an idealized portrait?

To answer these questions, one must first recognize how indigenous photography of the nineteenth-century Arab world cannot be separated from the era known as *al-nahdah al-ʿarabiyah* (the Arab Renaissance), which unfolded within a larger Ottoman reform movement known as the Tanzimat Reforms (1839–1876) and *Osmanlılık* (Ottomanist) modernity. The Tanzimat, or *Risorgimento*, was the nineteenth-century reform movement in the Ottoman Empire which started with Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) and ended with Sultan Abdülhamid (r. 1876–1909). Traditionally, the Tanzimat is marked by the disbandment of the elite infantry of the Janissaries (known as the “Auspicious Event” in 1826) and the Edict of Gülhane (1839), which ushered in a series of legislative and legal reforms, including new land, civil, and criminal codes. *Osmanlılık*, or Ottomanism, was the term used to identify the values and principles of this movement.

In embedding early photographic practices, whether commercial, amateur, or Kodak, within *al-nahdah*, we acknowledge the ideological and compositional unity constructed through what I have called “*nahdah* photography.” Commercial photographers of Istanbul, Beirut, Jerusalem, Haifa, Cairo, and Alexandria transformed the compositional space of the photograph into a stabile stage, on which subjects were reproduced and reenacted reformist values, and *nahdah* ideologies and social relations provided a new type of modern subjectivity.⁴ It is within this geographic, social, and political framework that we shall examine amateur photography, particular of the “Ottoman Arab world” as defined by the provincial capitals of the Levant and Egypt. Within this political geography, the continual repetition of form, content, exchange, circulation, display, and aesthetic of the *nahdah* studio portrait interpellated, in the words of Louis Althusser, “individuals into subjects”—individuals coming into national and class subjects who were simultaneously interpolated into the vision of a *nahdah* and Ottoman modernity.⁵ The surface of these seemingly stabilizing photographs and the legibility of their “manifest content” were not without tensions or displaced histories. On the contrary, in addition to enacting a particular form of selfhood and reproducing the ideologies of “reform,” the role of the *nahdah* portrait was to keep at bay a world lost through modernization, its disruption, and the violence of social transformations and arcane social relations, which reform discourses had painted as backward and hindering the pursuit of modernity.

This particular chapter focuses on early amateur photography and the early reception of the Kodak camera as especially expressed through turn-of-the-century

Arabic print sources. In examining its appearance, I will explore whether the photographic discourses of *al-nahdah al-ʿarabiyah* were disrupted and whether the ideological hegemony of the *nahdah* representation cracked under a seeping in of the displaced or "latent" histories which reform discourse demonized.⁶ I will map the discourses of amateur and Kodak photography to discover that they mobilized similar representational sets as their counterparts in studio practice. Contrary to the assumption that amateur photography might hold different compositional codes or aesthetics, amateur and Kodak photographers formalistically could not escape the social relations and discursive regimes of *al-nahdah* which were so thoroughly and effectively enacted and represented by photography.

THE KODAK CAMERA AND AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY

How to take perfect photographs: A guide to amateur photography (1927) was an Arabic-language manual produced by Eastman Kodak and published in Cairo. It was surely reproduced in a number of languages with minor, if any alterations, to accommodate different locales or cultural contexts. The manual explains how the two competing vectors of truth-value and experience, that maintain tension within Lacan's concept of the image-screen,⁷ are further compressed by the Kodak camera. It refers to the glass plate process of the professional photographer as a touchstone for its own marvel, a touchstone that the Kodak claims to surpass. "In the home or outside in public," the manual advertises, "the Kodak will give you photographs more exact than a photograph on polished glass."⁸ This statement alerts the reader to the intimacy between the Kodak, amateur photography, and traditional, outdated commercial glass plate photography. The first understanding, then, when approaching the introduction of the Kodak into the Arab world in the late nineteenth century is that it could have only been received socially and intellectually through the normative scopic regime that *al-nahdah* had already established. Concomitantly, any discussion of the Kodak already contained adjacent discussions and practices of studio photography and traditional glass-plate amateur photography.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, studio and amateur photography were subjected to rapid transformations and developments in technology and in the chemistry of photography. Certainly, a number of amateur photographers existed, but this hobby was based on the mastery of specialized knowledge that, despite becoming increasingly simplified, remained rooted in acquiring cameras, chemicals, materials, and accoutrements. In this regard, the Kodak itself could not be absorbed into the current practice, political economy, and sociability of photography without affecting or participating in photography's roles of interpellation and interpolation in the Ottoman Arab world at the turn of the twentieth-century.

Tracking the effects of the Kodak and amateur photography is difficult. The timeline is obscured by the hegemony of studio practice, the prominence of amateur photography, photographic knowledge in the Arab press, and early interest in the Kodak and Brownie in Khedivate Egypt (1867–1914) and Ottoman Syria. Most notably, Iskandar Makarius (1882–1952) was taken by the Kodak. By the turn of the century, Makarius had replaced his father, Shahin Makarius, as the resident photography expert for the journal *al-Muqtataf*. Iskander is best known for establishing the famously popular *al-Lata'if al-musawwarah* (Illustrated pleasantries) in 1920s Cairo, the Arab world's most prominent photographically-illustrated magazines. In 1905, while still the science editor at *al-Muqtataf* (1876–1952), Makarius remarked that since the wet collodion process ceded to gelatin plates, “the number of photographers has increased, so too has the number of portraits increased.”⁹ Makarius' interest in photography and photographic innovation outstripped even that of his father. The Kodak, which he marks not as the invention of the box camera but as the introduction of celluloid film, offered, he proclaimed, new possibilities for him.

Makarius opens his article on “Modern Photography” (1905) by stating that, “[P]hotographers from the previous age would sensitize glass plates before their photographs.” As a result, many a photographer “would suffer among the difficulties in mixing the sensitive chemicals and perfecting the desired coating of the glass.” He continues, “[M]any have paid attention to learning this art but few individuals have specialized in it.” For those who had, “they had a large amount of good fortune” and had much perseverance.¹⁰ These “new” photographers populated an era when photography offered the native subject an opportunity to *enact* modernity by mastering and using modern technology and current scientific knowledge. I borrow the term “enact” (and “enactment”) from clinical psychology in place of “perform” and “performance” to illustrate fully how photography was a social and subjective practice that manifested a particular epistemology and perspective of modernity rather than specifically producing it. With this in mind, we regard Makarius as a privileged interlocutor of those practices, discourses, and perspectives.

In *al-Muqtataf*, Makarius notes that the invention of celluloid film had marked a “new era,” “the era of film.” In “Film in English and in French *pellicule* [film],” he writes:

“[Film] is a *raqq* [parchment] like pliable and fine paper but it is transparent like glass. One of its surfaces is coated in sensitive gelatin, the same substance coated on glass plates. Film has taken the place of sensitized glass, however. When one would previously photograph on glass, one can now take the picture on film without any apparent difference in the photograph.”¹¹

Makarius' triumphalist explanation tells as much about the previous era as it does about the invention of the Kodak and its film. Makarius, his father, and the journal

al-Muqtataf consistently focused on the latest technological advancements in photography and took care to provide instructions and updates on how to perform photographic tasks according to the latest scientific inventions. Discoveries in underwater photography, X-ray imaging, aerial photography, enlarging photographs, imaging microbes and bacteria, photographing lightning, and sending photographs through the telegraph were only a small selection of articles that coexisted with others in *al-Muqtataf* on how to take photographs, how to develop photographs with the newest chemistry, how to stage portraits, how to preserve photographs, and how to arrange photographs to beautify the home. Specific instructions on enlargement processes or cleaning photographs were also found among the announcements, summaries, accounts, and explanations of the technicalities of new scientific-photographic developments.¹²

The only topic in photography that overshadowed Makarius’s interest in film was his life-long fascination with advances in developing color photography. From 1907, he had attended yearly photographic exhibitions in Paris and at the Royal Academy in London where he witnessed the debut of *Autochrome Lumière*, the new color process for photography. Writing from Khartoum, he relates how years earlier, the French photographer Louis Ducos du Hauron (1837–1920) announced to the Academy of Sciences in France that he had invented a process for color photography, using three separate overlapping plates (for the primary colors red, green, and blue) to form a composite colorized photograph. The “secret” of *Autochrome Lumière* was to combine these into one plate, if not as a mass-reproducible product.¹³ The Lumières’ “precise work” “hit the mark of success” and made an impact on Makarius, who wrote several articles on the revolutionary developments happening in photography at the time.¹⁴

Makarius’ experiences with color were transformative. Rather than “talking about the relationship between business, industry, science, and photography,” he excitedly notes, “a new branch of [photography], which will have a place in the future, because it is the leading way to [re]produce photographic images directly in natural color.”¹⁵ While the use of light and chemicals in black-and-white photography captures the *manzhar* (view), for Makarius, color supersedes black-and-white photography, representing *experience* with the “natural world.” For the first time in the discussion of photography in *al-Muqtataf*, the “absence of color” indicted the truth-value that the camera supposedly reproduced. Color photography, we are told, does not “accurately” reproduce the perspective of black-and-white photography, which was never in question; rather, it reproduces the *experience* that the photograph represented. The autochrome process opens the possibility, in which:

“[...] the beauty of natural sight arises in a variety of vibrant colors that wins over the eyes of the viewer. They feel comfort in these views and are excited by feeling *al-istihsan* [pleasure] and *al-surur* [happiness]. Many beautiful sights will delight

the viewer and inebriate the mind. If they were void of color, there would be nothing in them but light and darkness.”¹⁶

Thus, color opened a new level of verisimilitude, in which personal experiences buttressed the *nahdah* photographic perspective, and pleasure and happiness met the objectivity of mind. This extended discussion of Makarius’s fascination with color photography was an important detour also to explore how *nahdah* photography was organized around a specific normative scopic regime that maintained a tension between its positivist truth value and its ability to represent the experiences of the new photographic *nahdah* subject. Makarius’ writings on photography elucidate the centrality of performativity to photographic production, knowledge, and practice. For all the unique and cutting-edge breakthroughs that attracted his attention, Makarius fundamentally approached photography as a *tanfidh* (applied) science. He notes the centrality of photography in modern life:

“The doctor, engineer, craftsman, scientist, scholar, and worker rely on photography in their work to various degrees of importance. You have seen what it has done in astronomy, medicine, engineering, etching, printing, and other professions.”¹⁷

In relaying the latest technological developments, Makarius repeatedly identifies photography as a practice located in everyday life, at work and at home, during his father’s tenure as editor. He stresses that despite the accuracy and precision of the camera, the photograph was still contingent on the photographer. It was often in need of repair, *retouche*, and/or cosmetic attention, noting, “[M]any images are manipulated and worked on artistically while rarely anyone from the public notices. This *retouche* of the imperfections of portraits is a skill of the photographer.”¹⁸

The significance of the photographer in the photographic process, and the knowledge, perseverance, and character of the photographer in *nahdah* writing about photography returns us to the Kodak. *Nahdah* photography was fundamentally a technological process, a part of the (re)enactment of *Osmanlılık* modernity. One might think that the Kodak displaced the supremacy of the knowledge-practice-subject nexus whereas photography offered an opportunity for the indigenous Arab subject to enact native modernity through a practice of modern knowledge. The opposite, however, seems to have been true.

The Kodak was a tour-de-force within the *nahdah* worldview, a culmination of popularizing scientific knowledge into social practices—practices that could cross between public and private spaces, exteriors and interiors, and the formal and the personal. By the first decade of the twentieth century, placing the ability to reproduce modern experiences through photography had superseded the preeminence of mastering knowledge as a means to social efficacy. Indeed, the continued success of

photography studios throughout the Arab world evinced that these two practices were not mutually exclusive or contradictory. The introduction of the Kodak camera and film heralded a new moment, however. It brought photography into a new political economy, one of a new scale and sense of time. Makarius writes:

"The Eastman Company became famous in England and America by making small Kodak cameras, which easily use film in them. People have embarked on buying it and it has become known as a 'box camera'. One size of one of them does not exceed the size of a normal book in length, width and thickness. The tourists who visit Egypt in the winter do not go anywhere without their Kodak, immortalizing the images of the sights with the *film's surface* [emphasis mine], which they find pleasant to look at after they return to their countries."¹⁹

The Kodak enabled subjects then to depict the same "pleasures" that they might have through color photography, and it ushered more subjects into the social practices of photography. In doing so, the box camera altered the scale of photography, drawing closer together the production of the image, the private space, and the ephemeral moment with a subject who experienced them.

Makarius' seemingly banal passage above contains a force that may not be immediately detected. He makes it clear that the folding pocket and box cameras have a history of which the Egyptians and Syrians were well aware. While Makarius suggests to his readers that they take pictures of the places they travel to, he and his compatriots were surely aware of the throngs of European tourists who came to Egypt and the Holy Lands armed with portable cameras. His passage, then, is evocative of other commentaries by Arab writers about the Kodak, and particularly, its intrusion into the private and public spaces of their lived worlds. Muhammad al-Muwaylihi (1868–1930) writes in *Hadith 'Isa ibn Hisham* (The story of 'Isa ibn Hisham, 1907) of cameras and the ill-intentions carried by foreigners traveling to Egypt. Attending a wedding for a nouveau-riche merchant, the protagonist, a resurrected pasha, inquires of his interlocutor about the strange attendance of a group of female European tourists who were "proceeding up the stairs to the bride's chamber as if climbing the Pyramids." The pasha asks, "What are those vessels that I see the women carrying in their hands? Are they jewelry boxes gifted to the bride?" His friend explains:

"These are cameras that the women are carrying to capture the *manazhar* [views] of the harem and to take pictures of the women in their bejeweled dresses and their fullest charms. The wedding party welcomes them, and then the women return to their countries (*diyarihinna*). They might, then, make 1000s of copies of these pictures to sell in the European markets, and there, they are distributed to be mocked and ridiculed."²⁰

Al-Muwaylihi's narrative intersects with Makarius's description in many ways, not the least of which is understanding the camera as a social and political practice inextricably linked to the power, politics, and the economy of representation. More importantly than describing European, and indeed, gendered practices of tourist photography, they both demonstrate an awareness of the camera, speaking not only to Europeans but also to their Arab audience of both its promise and its threat. This self-awareness goes against the dominant historiography of Orientalist photography and reminds us of John Tagg's own analysis, which states that, "[E]very photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming, and constructing a total view of reality. Hence the crucial role of photography in ideological struggle. Hence the necessity of our understanding a weapon which we can use and which can be used against us."²¹ As proto-colonial subjects in constant dialogue with an imperial Europe that had explicit designs on Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine, al-Muwaylihi's and Makarius' readers recognized what was later observed by Susan Sontag: "[T]here is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera."²²

Makarius was acutely aware of the radical differences in scale presented by the political economy of the Kodak and film. He speaks of the advantages of both film and glass, suggesting that the former is faster, lighter, more portable, and can "take several images in a very short period of time."²³ Compact, precise, and mobile, the possibilities of self and national representation for their Arabic readership must have been endless, especially if they could now represent themselves, their national treasures, their "beautiful views" without the hazards and the tribulations of "amateur" or professional photography. The box camera was like color photography. Both were inexorably linked to the discourses and social practices that combined to make photography relevant, meaningful, and necessary. Both brought internal experiences into the realm of objective representation. The camera still could not be detached from these social practices and the sets of knowledge that made it possible and gave it value in the age of deemed progress and civilization. The Kodak, after all, was considered the very instantiation and expression of photography's latest stage of technological, and therefore, social evolution.

Makarius himself reminds his readers in another article about color photography: "[F]irst you have to learn the process of photography. Then you must practice the way that it was explained."²⁴ Kodak presented a moment that simplified, popularized, and disseminated that knowledge and practice all in one act. Its photographs could not avoid, then, being one more stage in the writing of their ideological moment. But unlike the studio portrait that so carefully staged the Arab *imago*, the Kodak, along with the rise of amateur photography, further riveted and interpellated subjects into new class, gender, and social roles. As such, they too were stabilizing images that represented the truth-value of the interior lives and experiences of the Arab world's new subjects, citizens, and individuals.

SALIM ABU 'IZZ AL-DIN AND NAJIB AL-'ALAM

Kodak and amateur photography operated similarly to studio practice, because they participated in similar discursive regimes as *al-nahdah* and reproduced similar social relations, subjective ideals, and ideological representations. By the 1920s and 1930s, urban and rural subjects frequently photographed themselves and their lived worlds. The images that dominated amateur and Kodak photographs were families on the balconies of their new urban apartment buildings, their cars, their drives, and their picnics in the countryside, as well as snapshots of men, women, and children carousing in parks or with peasants in rural areas and ancestral villages, dancing at parties, weddings, or impromptu candid shots. By this time, premade photographic albums that once held cartes de visite of family members and famous people morphed into family albums populated by amateur photographs taken on glass, as well as snapshots taken with the box camera.

The photographic albums of the famous Palestinian musician Wasif Jawhariyah (1897–1972) illustrate the movement between studio photography and the portable camera.²⁵ Jawhariyah begins his "Illustrated History of Palestine" with a procession of class studio portraits of Ottoman and Palestinian officials. The first pages read like a premade album, listing notable leaders and popular turn-of-the-century figures. The album-qua-history book turns from carte de visite portraits to professional photographs of political events in Palestine before, during, and after World War I (1914–1918). Palestinian photographers, such as Garabed Krikorian (1847–1920), Khalil Ra'ad (1854–1957), 'Isa Sawabini, Daoud Sabounji, and the American Colony, photographed the imperial visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1888–1918) and his wife Augusta Victoria (1851–1921) to Palestine in 1898; the first Ottoman airplane landing in Palestine in 1914; images of Jamal Pasha (1872–1922) on horseback and with his family; the mobilization of Palestine during the war; and Jerusalem's surrender to the British. These professional images have become increasingly adjacent to non-professional images of political and social players and events in Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁶

For our purposes, it is important to note how studio portraits and professional photographs, while eventually yielding significant ground to the Kodak image, comfortably coexisted with it throughout the twentieth century. Their authority during the first two decades of the twentieth century reconfigured rather than necessarily challenged the normative scopic regime of *al-nahdah*. This is because the normative, *al-manzhar al-nahdah* (the *nahdah* perspective), was already imbricated with the aesthetic notion of beauty, the sublime, personal experience, and spiritualism.²⁷ For example, Ahmad Fahmi, an Egyptian engineering student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, wrote to his compatriots in 1887 on the significance of *al-funun al-jamilah* (the fine arts). He states that they are the highest achievement of a "civilized society" but also the expression of the sublime, in which "the Creator is the origin of natural beauty,

beauty of wisdom and literary beauty.”²⁸ The moral rectitude, even piety, of the artists (including photographers) and their subject, their dignity, *akhlaq* (character), civility, and citizenry all conjoined in the expressions of art. The proto-Romantic *nahdawi* writings of the nineteenth century, such as by Salim al-Bustani (1848–1884), show how *nahdah* positivism always expressed an element of radical experiential subjectivity that outstretched the norms of nationality, class, and gender identity. The same can be said for the earliest Arabic writing about photography, in which Yusuf al-Jalkh, the author of the first treatise on photography in Arabic, wrote, “[T]he rays of light” captured by the camera “*admihlal* [illuminate] the darkness of the ignorance from our *absarina* [vision]” and provide our “daily realities” and inner feelings with scientific *barahin* (proofs).²⁹

The box camera put this ability in the hands of the “new men and women” of *al-nahdah*, to borrow from Peter Gran.³⁰ Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din (1873–1943) is emblematic of these “new men,” the new *effendiyah* class of Greater Syria and Egypt. This *effendiyah* class was the Ottoman Arab world’s own new middle class that arose with the growth of state and local bureaucracies, the reorganization of land tenure, and the explosion of foreign and native commercial and industrial ventures. The life of Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din weaves a narrative of earned accomplishment, the rise of an educated, transnational bureaucratic *effendiyah* class, and a political economy managed between local elites and the Ottoman, British, and Egyptian ruling powers. It is an archetypal tale of the new Ottoman, post-Ottoman, Khedival man. A Druze born in Abadih, Lebanon, and educated at the prestigious Brummana High School, Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din was an official in the Maritime Company in Istanbul. He moved to Cairo where he was an employee of the British High Commission and made an “Officer of the British Empire.” After Egyptian independence (1922), he became an assistant director-general of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior. In addition to his professional achievements, he was also an avid amateur photographer, who used both the Kodak and traditional glass-plate cameras, a practice that remained prevalent well after the introduction of celluloid.

Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din’s large collection of amateur photographs presents a gentleman accompanied by his well-dressed, dignified, and clearly-loved wife Lutfiyah along with their two children, ‘Azizah, and Fu’ad. The images are both public and private. The family snapshots and staged photographs are equally playful and varied. They show an affluent family, posing in their house, garden, and outdoors, with each other, their friends, their servants, their small dog, and their horses in Lebanon and Egypt. The glass portraits are often staged like studio photographs, in which a white tarp forms the background for his wife Lutfiyah and/or children as in any formal portrait. Other images are taken in more candid fashion. The formalized portraits of Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din show him in his official uniform, as a state *fonctionnaire*, a functionary of the Maritime Company, or as a well-dressed effendi.



___ 1: 'Azizah Abu 'Izz al-Din, Salim Abu 'Izz al-Din, courtesy of the Foundation for the Arab Image.

The private images stand in contrast to the archive of studio portraits and even his self-portraits taken at home. The portraits depict a family of means. Women pose in Edwardian linen dresses, the son Fu'ad in sailor suits typical for the age, and the daughter 'Azizah in the garden with her dolls. Images of mother and daughter on the palatial stairs leading to their home stand along snapshots of a group of family and friends on horseback in front of the pyramids. The images represent interior spaces. The interiority is not only spatial but also subjective. If studio portraits interpellated individuals into subjects, representing and mediating the *nahdah* vision, it seems that amateur photography and early snapshots reproduced this earlier aesthetic. Salim Abu 'Izz al-Din's photograph of his daughter in their salon replicated the spatial, aesthetic, and subjective arrangement of the idealized studio portrait (fig. 1). Its composition can, at best, only give depth and contrast to the standardized cabinet card family portrait. These images were not produced by Kodak but on glass. However, the amateur nature and snapshot-like characteristics of the photograph, taken in 1898, causes us to reconsider the overlapping compositional and epistemological qualities of a number of photographic media.

Studio images in Beirut, Jerusalem, and Cairo, for example, were not restricted to the formal poses of men, women, and children in pants, dresses, and/or *qumbaz* and *shirwal*. Certainly by the 1890s, posing in theatrical clothing and self-Orientalizing dress (i.e., dressing up as Bedouin or peasantry) was common. Studio photographers, such as Jurji (Georges) Saboungi (1840–1927) and Spiridon Chaïb in Beirut, Garabed Krikorian in Jerusalem, and expatriate and co-owned studios in Cairo, all photographed local *effendiyah* in “traditional” costumes, in which they would pose in Arab headdress with props such as clay water bottles and outdated muskets. Likewise, by the early twentieth century, studios, for example As’ad Dakouny in Beirut, would offer genre scenes posed with cardboard cutouts, props of planes and trains, with markings such as “Beirut-Damascus Railway.”³¹

These playful expressions give a subjective texture to the studio portrait that was absent from the flat, standardized, repetitive, and generic patterns of the *carte de visite* and the cabinet card. Kodak and amateur photography arose from within this inherent space of photography. It was the outgrowth of a kernel of subjective interiority that was expressed even by the most stilted studio portrait, but certainly within the playful genre images of self-orientalized and fantastic images.

Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din’s amateur photography then extended photographic perspectives into the interior spaces. ‘Azizah standing on a chair in the salon recalls the articles in *al-Muqtataf* that advised the “new men and women” of the Arab world to “proliferate” photographs and photographic albums in the living room, giving explicit instructions on how to arrange and “spread [them] throughout the room.”³² The column “Tadbir al-Bayt [Arranging the home]” relays:

“You can collect many of photographs in frames, which you can make inexpensively at home. This is done by cutting a piece from cardboard and making it into a frame and you dress it in velvet or material or some sort of textile.... Gather these frames together and fill a narrow space with them one after the other. It can be simply arranged and standing up on a table in a zigzag pattern so all the photographs are apparent, thereby best utilizing the photographs from the purchased album.”³³

Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din’s photograph illustrates verbatim the prescriptions found in articles, such as “Arranging the home.” Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din shared a common scopic field of effendi experiential and subjective representation also found in the *nahdah* studio photography and in *nahdah* writing. The numerous photographs in his salon are a combination of portraits that he took of his wife next displayed alongside formal studio portraits. The portraits are not staged for photographing but, on the whole, arranged permanently throughout the room. The framed photographs show a well-dressed and dignified Lutfiyah—the public wife—and portraits of their children.



— 2: Self-Portrait, Najib al-'Alami, courtesy of the Foundation for the Arab Image.

The images look at 'Azizah, as well as looking at the camera, as if they too were the subjects of the portrait vying for the onlooker's attention. They give the image a self-consciousness that does not disrupt the transparency of the image, but in fact stabilizes it further, assuring the view of the naturalness of the photograph and its display. If any image screams of particular social relations, it is this photograph, combining commentaries on class and gender, interior space, and the *nahdah* discourse on *dhawq* (taste) that were enacted by the "new men and women" of Egypt and Greater Syria.³⁴

Perhaps this is what amateur photography and the Kodak added to *nahdah* photography: a self-awareness that could not be expressed through traditional studio portraiture. The collection of Najib and Hanna al-'Alam, two brothers from northern Lebanon, is emblematic of the representational sets that box camera owners repro-

duced. Najib al-‘Alam’s images of himself and his family, their car, their visit to Beirut’s Raouche, and their interior spaces speak of this self-awareness. Most of all, Najib al-‘Alam’s self-portrait speaks volumes to the new interiority of the modern era. The image does not only represent a subject in the boudoir or salon, quite literally, mirroring the subject and commodities of modernity (fig. 2). Najib al-‘Alam, the son of an “educated” family in a major yet still economically-underdeveloped town in northern Lebanon, shows us a portrait of the interior of a subject who distinguishes himself from the clannish and parochial politics for which his town is known. Amateur photography did not generate a new representational set or discourse of subjectivity in Lebanon and the Arab world. It only represented the spaces of interiority that had been created by the political economy and discourse of *al-nahdah* and its aftermath.

The images in Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din’s and Najib al-‘Alam’s portraits of spatial and subjective interiors are not unique to amateur photography. These amateur practices in Arab metropolises expanded on what studio and amateur photography had already contained. It also brought the native subject into the universal spectrum of representing experiences pictorially, while simultaneously representing the interiors of experience to which the studio portrait could only elude. Amateur photography reached into the subject itself to provide its own supplement, not having to rely on inscriptions and writings to provide the “jointness” between truth and experience. It provides, in the words of Margaret Mahler, the “object constancy” of the image-object as coherent and consistent to one’s world-view and psychic unity.³⁵ In a world that was defined by a reorganization of communal and social hierarchies, national identities, class affiliations, and gender roles, the box camera and amateur photography enacted *nahdah* subjectivities (national, individual, class, and gender) to displace the disconnect between subjects and their local communalism. Photography, and especially amateur photography, was then a by-product of individualization and individuation. Communal and feudal relations between subjects and their communities and rulers underwent a shift whereby the Lebanese realigned social and power relations along sectarian lines in Lebanon. In Egypt, new bureaucratic mercantile and working classes came into existence, and the peasantry was born as a homogenized class, all configured within the hierarchies of an emergent Egyptian nationalism. Palestine and Syria’s traditional elites were reconstituted by Ottoman reforms, forcing traditional ruling families to renegotiate their relationships to the state and their constituencies.³⁶

Within the Ottoman Arab world, photography functioned to stabilize subjects, classes, discourses, and new social modes of power and hierarchy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The photograph’s object constancy “joins” the *nahdah* subject with the rationalist order of *al-‘asr al-jadid* (the new age) through an ideological process of identification.³⁷ Freud spoke of these processes when he discussed the mechanics of individuation, which is pronounced during the disorienting

transformations of the modern period. Freud observed that no identification between objects or subjects could transpire without the mediation of the ego. His reflections on individuation were therefore relevant in as much as he centered on the processes of identification in describing the bounded ego's desire for and investment in exterior objects.³⁸

This is where Freud most closely overlaps with Marx's commodity fetishism. Marx explained how the process of identification between humans and "things qua commodities," subjects and objects, endows objects with social life. The object then contains the imprint of the nature of social relations (labor in capitalist sociability), social relations that are imprinted on the photograph, even as the process of mystification portrays them as natural.³⁹ While maintaining different exchange values than their professional counterparts, amateur portraits entered into a more condensed and individualized "personal" network of sociability to give photographs their own fetishized character. Perhaps more accurately, photography in amateur hands only naturalized the photograph more, further repressing the social relations that it registers and reproduces. Therefore, the aesthetic, visual architecture, and semiotic legibility of Salim Abu 'Izz al-Din's and Najib al-'Alam's photography do not present an epistemological or representational rupture between the studio and amateur photography, because they operate on similar processes of identifications between representation, selfhood, and the photographic surface.

The box camera demonstrated the degree to which photographic technology insinuated itself into lived experiences to mediate it. Its ubiquity and the ubiquity of its images evince how the photographic "perspective" had become naturalized and collapsed into, not only a schematic national subjecthood and its public persona, but also organized the intimate interior of the new men and women of the Arab Middle East. The Kodak and Brownie compressed even more tightly the manifest and latent into a photographic space where, as Freud also reminds us, libidinal desires find their expressions in the availability or prohibition of objects, and simultaneously this act of desiring is an act of individuation.⁴⁰ The amateur photograph is no more or less a document to these libidinal desires than studio portraits, both expressing an identification with a newly formed individual, and his or her class, national, and gender ideals, aesthetic forms, modes of behavior, and social networks.

Amateur photography, and eventually the Kodak and other box cameras, provided one more level of *enactment*, one more pylon of stabilization for an individualized, classed subject. Perhaps amateur photography did differ from the *carte de visite* inasmuch as it did not require the magnitude and variety of repetitious elements of the studio portrait, the standardized poses, backdrops, props, the multiple copies, and frames. Without these repetitions, it enacted the political economy of the Self (whether individual, gendered, classed, communal, or national) by reaching into the interior spaces of the individual him- or herself, into the spaces of the reconfigured

family, into the new home, and into the new sense of leisure time. In the context of the Ottoman Middle East, the amateur image affirmed that an *individual* and individuated *subject* rest at the heart of the image. The image condenses representation of national unity, class propriety, and gender into a new image-screen—the *point de capiton*, through which multiple vectors of political economy, subjectivity, signification system, and social discourse passed—intended not just for circulation among classes and social spaces but also precisely for the interiors that it represented.⁴¹

NOTES

- 1 Collins, *Kodak*, 92.
- 2 Staff, "Egypt and Palestine," 478.
- 3 Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*, 60.
- 4 For previous discussions of *nahda* photography, see Sheehi, "Social History;" "Sheehi, Nahda After-Image;" Sheehi, "Before Painting;" Sheehi, "Portrait Paths;" Sheehi, "Sab-oungi;" and Sheehi, *Arab Imago*.
- 5 Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 164.
- 6 For a good example, see Behdad/Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism*; Nassar, *Laqatat*; Nassar, "Snapshots;" Nassar, "Palestine;" Baron, *Egypt*; and Mrowat, "Abbud."
- 7 The *image-screen*, according to Lacan, is the meeting point between the subject's eye and the object of the gaze; it is a tangent plane where two inverted or mirrored prisms intersect; it is the vinculum fastening the photograph's index and ideology to material objects, social practices, and modes of economy (Lacan, *Concepts*, 106–107). For an extended discussion of *nahdah* photography and the image-screen, see Sheehi, *Arab Imago*.
- 8 Anonymous, *Kayfiyat*, 6.
- 9 Makarius, "Taswir autukhrumatiki," 402; and Makarius, "Film," 225.
- 10 Makarius, "Film," 225.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 See, for example, how to clean oil painted photographs and paintings, Anonymous, "Tanzhif." For another article on enlargement, see Anonymous, "Suwar," as well as other articles about large photographs by the famous Legekian Brothers and others of the American Presidents Grant (elected 1869–1877), Arthur (elected 1881–1885), and Cleveland (elected 1885–1889, 1893–1897). See, respectively, Anonymous, "Takbir;" and Anonymous, "Suwar."
- 13 Makarius, "Taswir shamsi." See also Makarius 1912.
- 14 Makarius, "Mulawwanah," 858.
- 15 Makarius, "Zujaj," 317.
- 16 Ibid., 320.
- 17 Ibid., 317.
- 18 Makarius, "Taswir autukhrumatiki," 402.
- 19 Makarius, "Film," 225–226.

- 20 Al-Muwaylihi, *Hadith*, 170–171.
- 21 Tagg, “Understanding,” 294.
- 22 Sontag, *On Photography*, 7; 39.
- 23 Makarius, “Film,” 226.
- 24 Makarius, “Mulauwwanah,” 1034.
- 25 See Jawhariyah’s unpublished albums found at the Institute of Palestine Studies, Beirut. The diary has been published in full in Arabic in two volumes: Jawhariyah, *al-Quds al-‘Uthmaniyah*, and Jawhariyah, *al-Quds al-intidabiyah*. For an abridged translation, see Jawhariyyeh, *Storyteller*. For an introduction to the author, see Tamari, “Jerusalem’s Ottoman Modernity.” See also Nassar, “Jawharieh” and Sheehi, “Portrait Paths.”
- 26 For a discussion of Jawhariyah’s photography albums, see Sheehi, “Portraits Paths.”
- 27 For a sophisticated and rare examination of the relationship between the aesthetics of photography, particularly within the colonial condition, see Chaudhary, *Afterimage*, in particular ch. 3 “Armor and Aesthesis,” in which Chaudhary notes that aesthetic form performs a “shielding and filtering” where “politics entered into the business of sensing and making sense of the world” (Chaudhary, *Afterimage*, 12).
- 28 Fahmi, “Funun,” 329–339.
- 29 Al-Jalkh, “Nabdhah,” 49.
- 30 For Gran’s analysis of the rise of particular classes and subjects, what he calls “new men,” see Gran, *Rise*, 60.
- 31 For a discussion of these “genre scenes,” see Strassler, *Refracted Vision*.
- 32 Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din, 484.
- 33 Ibid., 485.
- 34 For a brief discussion of Salim Abu ‘Izz al-Din’s and Hanna al-‘Alam’s photography, see Sheehi, “Social History.”
- 35 Mahler, *Symbiosis*, 224.
- 36 For a larger and more detailed examination of Mahler’s notion of jointness, object constancy, and *nahda* photography as a means of enacting and stabilizing identities, see Sheehi, *Arab Imago*.
- 37 See for example, Khuri, *Al-‘Asr al-jadid*.
- 38 See Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia.”
- 39 Marx, *Capital*, I, 83.
- 40 For an extended definition of libido theory, see Freud, *New Introductory Lectures*, 118–138; and Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays*, 60–63.
- 41 On Lacan’s concept of image screen, see above with n. 7.

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1–2: courtesy of the Foundation for the Arab Image.

MOHAMMAD SATTARI
AND KHADIJEH MOHAMMADI NAMEGHI

THE PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO OF THE NASERI HAREM
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRAN

Among the different applications of the camera in nineteenth-century Iran, the issue of photographing women and incompatibility with the European mode of representation was raised as a cultural concern from the very onset. Through his art and high status, the king, Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–1896), took the first steps in breaking this cultural taboo, and his photographs of women of his harem mark the beginning of representing known Iranian women through the lens of the camera. The Royal Studio, established officially by royal decree, was the first place to carry out photographic affairs of state and to develop and to print photographs. The recently-discovered documents reviewed in this article demonstrate that, based on ethical considerations concerning photographing women and developing and printing photographs of harem women, and given the distance separating the Royal Studio from the courtyard, Naser al-Din Shah thus allocated a space within the Naseri court as a private studio specifically for royal women to be photographed. The Imperial Harem Studio was dedicated only to photographing the harem under the management of one of the most outstanding and influential women of the court, the shah's *sigheh* (temporary wife) Aminah Aqdas (d. 1893).

Although photography arrived in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar (r. 1834–1848), its growth and the development of photographic technique began in the Naseri court. The interest and passion of Naser al-Din Shah for this novel art form took photography from the enclosure of the Naseri palaces to the ordinary people, who were later keen on having their portraits taken in public studios. To address this public demand, the shah ordered Aqa Reza Eqbal al-Saltaneh (Aqa Reza 'Akkasbashi, 1843–1889),¹ the first professional Iranian photographer, to establish the first public studio in 1868, which was managed by 'Abbas-'Ali Bayk,² Aqa Reza's trainee.³ Thereafter, the establishment of new studios in Tehran and other city centers increased. The overwhelming, growing number of photographers met with little resistance. However, the realism of photography, as opposed to the imaginary pictures of paintings and miniatures, created anxiety among men in regard to depicting female relatives and companions. The fear of women posing in front of the camera and in full view of

a stranger, as well as the potential for others to obtain such photographs, made the prospect of photographing women seem like an impossibility. For example, an advertisement for Dar al-Fonun Studio⁴ from 21 Muharram 1294 hijra (February 5, 1877) published in chapter 12 of the scientific journal explicitly forbids the presence of women in the studio:

“Chapter 12: The establishment of this studio is exclusive to men, and the women of society, whether fully veiled or with uncovered faces, whether Muslim or outside the religion of Islam, whose beliefs in the veil is not mandatory, are strictly forbidden from entering the studio.”⁵

In addition to women being barred from the studio, a number of hardliners began a campaign against photographing women and made the conditions more difficult. According to the Qajar court historian ‘Abdolhosayn Khan Sepehr, Lisan Malek al-Movarekhin (1868–1933), he writes:

“Mer’at al-Soltan Laskhkar-Nevis has purchased a photograph box, and in the corner of ‘Abdol-‘azim (AS) Shrine [in Rayy], he quickly takes the photograph of every passing woman, veiled or not. He says that he takes the photographs of the veiled ones from below.”⁶

Despite these common restrictions, Naser al-Din Shah had the first exclusive right to photograph women. He would take photographs of anybody and anything that belonged to him, which included everyone in his kingdom, taking portraits of harem women in private surroundings, of Babri Khan (the shah’s cat), and of the servants and maids. The shah’s great pursuit of photography, and in particular, photographs of the women in the harem, spearheaded the breaking of taboos and the removal of the common norm.⁷ However, this taboo-breaking was only really allowed for the shah and under special conditions; the social prohibition against photographing women in the studio was still applied as a general rule for other court photographers.

In compliance with the prevailing norms and following the monarch’s orders to the Royal Studio, Aqa Reza never took photographs of women. The few images of women in his oeuvre were either prepared during different trips as instructed by the shah and under his watchful eye for the purpose of gathering detailed information about cities and different tribes or they were pictures of little girls, who, according to Islamic jurisprudence, were not required to wear the veil until nine years of age and hence could be photographed.⁸ Taj al-Saltaneh (1884–1936), one of Naser al-Din Shah’s daughters, wrote in her memoirs:

“When they had promised my hand to my husband and I was eight years old, they took my photograph and sent it to him. All the relatives had seen this photograph, because I was eight years old and did not need to wear a veil.”⁹

THE IMPERIAL HAREM STUDIO

The French photographer Francis Carlhian (1818–1870) arrived in Iran in 1858. Naser al-Din Shah learned the wet collodion process directly or indirectly from him. By order of the shah, Aqa Reza took the necessary training from Carlhian, and since he had attained a certain excellence in the art, the shah bestowed him with the title ‘*akkasbashi* (Court Photographer) in 1863. Around this time, the shah allocated a building in the palace as a photography studio, dubbing it the “Imperial Photography Studio.”¹⁰ From then on, Naser al-Din Shah expanded his range of photographic activities, which included taking photographs of the women in the harem, boy servants, and buildings of the royal palace.

Photographing women is among the branches of the art that was taken up for the first time by Naser al-Din Shah, and it resulted in a large collection of photographs of women in the harem. This collection of images demonstrates the shah’s progress in photography and also provides important documents for the study of gender during this time. The pictures of harem inhabitants individually or as group portraits are available in the album treasury of Golestan Palace in Tehran. Some of these photographs were taken during travels but most at the Naseri court and in private settings. In photographing the harem women (when the shah also wanted to be in the frame) and in developing and printing the photographs, the shah was assisted by his confidantes Ja’far Qoli Khan, Nayer al-Molk,¹¹ Muchul Khan,¹² and ‘Aziz Khan Khawjeh,¹³ each providing a hand at specific periods. Except for the shah, those just named, and the harem itself, no one was permitted entry to the Imperial Harem Studio’s premises. Given the sensitivity of the subject and the ban on court photographers photographing women, one must ask whether the shah and the court photographers used a single studio for developing and printing the photographs of women. Or since most of the photographs of women depict them without veils and in private courtyards, did the shah have his heavy equipment carried (which was no easy feat given the size of early cameras) from the Imperial Photography Studio to the private quarters for each photography session?

The first official studio in Iran, the Imperial Photography Studio, was created by Naser al-Din Shah in a special royal building, and Aqa Reza ‘Akkasbashi was put in charge of all its affairs.¹⁴ This studio was located next to Shams al-‘Emareh.¹⁵ In the 1858, the *Mellati* newspaper reported the beginnings of photography in Iran and the establishment of the Imperial Photography Studio:



— 1: Hosayn ‘Ali, Golestan Palace, Harem.

“To promote the science and to expand this activity, one of the special royal buildings, located next to Shams al-‘Emareh and with an opening outside, was allocated to the studio and handed over to the ‘Akkasbashi [Aqa Reza] on His Majesty’s orders.”¹⁶

Shams al-‘Emareh is situated in the eastern wing of Golestan Palace. The Royal Court of the Golestan Palace was connected to the harem, which was also called the inner court or Farahabad, to the north by a number of doors and a narrow corridor. Before Naser al-Din Shah’s rule, the inner court consisted of buildings, rooms, and halls from the reign of Fath-‘Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797–1834). The harem subsequently underwent major improvements and renovations on three different occasions during Naser al-Din Shah’s reign. The first took place in 1854 under ‘Ali Khan Hajeb al-Dowleh (the father of Etemad al-Saltaneh). Then, in 1881, when the number of women in Naser al-Din Shah’s harem had increased and the space had gradually become congested, all the buildings constructed by ‘Ali Khan Hajeb al-Dowleh were demolished to expand the harem. The new building was constructed under the supervision of the chamberlain



— 2: Hosayn 'Ali, The building of the sleeping chamber, 1877.

Amin al-Soltan (Mirza Ebrahim Khan), and on January 17, 1883, the harem servants entered the premises (fig. 1). In his memoirs, E'temad al-Saltaneh wrote on November 11, 1882: "The shah's private quarters are not complete. The harem ladies are scattered and stay in the pantry, the attic, and the photography studio."¹⁷ In 1885, Naser al-Din Shah also decided to build himself a mansion in a new style based on Dolmabahçe Palace (1843–1856) in Istanbul; this was to be his sleeping chamber located in the middle of the harem garden, the *Khabgah*. This commission was also given to Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Amin al-Soltan (fig. 2).

The building of the sleeping chamber was inaugurated during a special ceremony on April 3, 1887.¹⁸ Two doors led from the royal quarters to the main office. One was next to the chambers of Taj al-Dowleh, the first official wife of Naser al-Din Shah, and the other was located next to the museum building at the north wing of the palace.¹⁹ The harem complex was destroyed during the Pahlavi period (1925–1979) and replaced with the current building of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. Thus, the main office of the Golestan Palace was situated between the Imperial Photography Studio and the harem.

DOCUMENTS REGARDING PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE HAREM

A document recently uncovered by the authors contains correspondence from Aqa Reza ‘Akkasbashi to the shah about the photographs of harem women (fig. 3):

“A number of boxes containing large and small photograph plates from the harem have remained in the studio for a long time, and every day the key for it is in the hands of someone different. It is the duty of your servant in this photographic operation to request that Your Majesty either order the boxes to be handed over to the harem or the plates to be erased. It is not proper for the harem photographs to be outside [in the studio], so kindly indulge your servant by not letting anyone know about this information. Your wish is my command.”²⁰

Comparing the location of the Shams al-‘Emareh with the harem and the documented proof of Aqa Reza’s communication with the shah, as well as documents that will be discussed below, it is possible to deduce that in the early days of photographing women, the shah used the Imperial Photography Studio to develop and print his pictures. However, as both his harem and his activities expanded, ethical issues—as pointed out by Aqa Reza ‘Akkasbashi—were raised, forcing the shah to reallocate another space in the harem as a studio. With that decision, all affairs related to photographs of the harem women were conducted in this studio by the shah and under his personal supervision.

In fact, next to the Imperial Photography Studio, which handled the palace’s photographic affairs and was where court photographers handled their charges, the Imperial Harem Studio was at the exclusive disposal of the shah and the harem women; beside them and the trusted Ja’far Qoli Khan, Nayer al-Molk, Muchul Khan, and ‘Aziz Khan Khawjeh, no one was permitted on the studio’s premises.

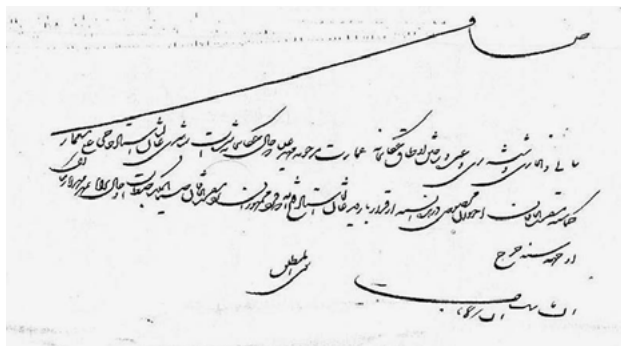
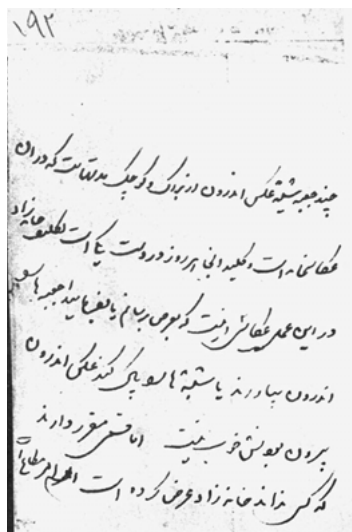
DOCUMENT ONE

The first supporting document is a telegraph from Amineh Aqdas²¹ to Naser al-Din Shah (referring to the shah’s first trip to Europe in 1873). It reads:

“Praise the Lord, I am very well thanks to the attention of Your Holy Majesty, for whom our souls may be sacrificed. On the return of the Pivot of the Universe, the lost soul regained the body, and for this joy, I shall thank the Lord 1,000 times. Your Majesty’s photograph reached us, and it was distributed. I placed the separate photograph you kindly presented on a chair in the yard. The ladies gather in the afternoon to visit it. Babri Khan expresses his servitude. I am busy the entire day, arranging the studio of the Pivot of the Universe.

Amineh Aqdas

23rd of the month of Rajab, 1290 *hejreh* [September 15, 1873].”²²



— 3: Correspondence of Aqa Reza 'Akkasbashi with Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, 1867, National Library and Archives Organisation, Tehran. — 4: Document on the conversion of a room in the late Mahd-e 'Olya's mansion into a studio, Golestan Palace, Document Center.

The studio referred to by Amineh Aqdas was located within the harem, where she could access it easily. A few years after the death of the shah's mother, Mahd-e 'Olya (1805–1873), a room in his late mother's mansion was reallocated to the studio, probably due to the confined spaces of the harem. In fact, by converting one of Mahd-e 'Olya's rooms to a studio, two such studio facilities were created on the harem's premises. The following three documents describe the conversion and construction of this new studio.

DOCUMENT TWO (FIG. 4)

“The masonry, carpentry, glazing, and construction of the studio's rooms from the edifices of the late Mahd-e 'Olya, which now house the studio that was under the supervision of the exalted Master Hajji 'Ali Me'mar, the Supreme Khan's special aide-de-camp, was visited in this year by the exalted Master Fathollah. Stamped by the Supreme Khan's aide Ziya' al-Molk, the situation now bears the seal of the Gentle Majesty for consideration of the expenditure invoice.

He is the Absolute

Year of the Dog

The sum of 1,048 toman and 3,350 dinar
 Supreme Khan's Aide, Amin al-Soltan
 4th of the month of Moharram, 1292 *hejreh* [February 11, 1875].”

DOCUMENT THREE

The third document is a handwritten note from Naser al-Din Shah to Amineh Aqdas (related to the shah's second trip to Europe in 1878):

“To Amineh Aqdas
 How are you? Write in details how the children are. You have, of course, cleaned the upper sections of the photography studio. If it requires repair or construction, tell the aghabashi to bring the memarbashi [architect] and repair it well. Let him clean the photography studio below as well and make it ready. God willing, We will come to Tehran very soon.”²³

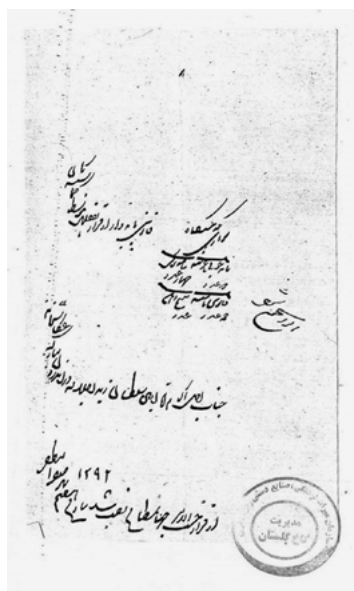
These two documents demonstrate that the Imperial Harem Studio was managed under the supervision of a prominent and influential woman of the Naseri Harem, Amineh Aqdas, and that its affairs were under the control of this wife even during the shah's absences and trips to Europe. The last document presented in this article reveals a list of photography equipment installed in the new Imperial Harem Studio.

DOCUMENT FOUR (FIG. 5)

“Mount one unit	Lantern with base as per the servant's statement
Wooden base with joint	Bronze arm
Two units	Four units
Lantern with Glass	Iron screw
Five units	One unit
Items to be added	

His Excellency the Exalted and Honorable Amin al-Soltan, may his glory increase, was installed as ordered by the All Generous inside the Imperial Harem Studio 7th of the month of Safar al-Mozaffar 1292 *hejreh* [March 15, 1875].”

While taking photographs of women was considered improper and contrary to shari'a law—although still within the right of the shah when only accessible to an intimate entourage and young eunuchs—the allocation of two sites within the harem as studios and their management by a court lady of high status prove that the new art of photography, which in the Naseri court was initially considered a manly art, rapidly gained acceptance by the women of the court, who at times may have also partaken



— 5: List of items purchased for the new Imperial Harem Studio, Golestan Palace, Document Center.

in this manly pursuit (fig. 4 on p. 63). Furthermore, the affectionate receipt of photographs dispatched to the harem by the shah during his European tours was among the important responsibilities of the harem women.

Noblemen and officials took the camera outside the boundaries of the court. From then on, it is possible to witness the appearance of family photographs, documentation of the role of women in daily life, and more relaxed and open attitudes in the photographs themselves. Some officials, such as the Dust ‘Ali Khan Mo‘ayyer al-Mamalek family²⁴ and the Sani‘ al-Saltaneh family,²⁵ were freely experimenting with different functions of the camera; for this reason, one finds a large number of images of women in their families wearing official and casual attire, situated in leisurely surroundings, and in photographs with special effects, such as photomontages.²⁶ Taking photographs of the women in officials’ families became an ordinary pursuit. The women of this class accepted photography, for both its special visual features and its specific status as an object of luxury and self-indulgence in Qajar Iran. The taboo of photographing women was broken to such an extent that ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar²⁷ (1850–1912) was granted permission to take photographs of women of the court and noble families.²⁸ His photographs of women demonstrate that he was among those photographers educated in Europe who fully abided by the principles of composition and lighting according to European tastes (due to his knowledge of European artworks). ‘Abdollah Qajar copied photographs of European women, and eventually photographing, and photographs of, women came into higher demand.²⁹

The courtier ‘Ayn al-Saltaneh wrote in his memoirs: “From there I proceeded to [the] bazaar. I bought nine new photographs of famous and renowned women. It [the bazaar] had many photographs of women. They were mostly bad. I came back home from there.”³⁰ Also:

“[I]t was a photography shop. It had photographs of women. He [the photographer] had taken them all himself and knew their names and families quite well. But they were mostly in bad form and shape. I mean the photographs were badly taken. As women take few photographs, they do not know the principles and the styles of sitting and attire that would be appropriate for photographs. The photographer is also not clever enough to make them understand how to take a good photograph according to the principles. Their inappropriate attires, their bad postures, and the obliviousness of the photographer have spoiled the photographs and rendered them unattractive.”³¹

With the appearance of public studios, photographs gradually found their way into homes, initially those of the Armenian families. Armenian women were the first to enter the public studios, and their presence is recorded in individual portraits and in family photographs.³² However, in other cases and although few, there were women photographers, such as Ashraf al-Saltaneh (wife of E‘temad al-Saltaneh), Fatemeh Khanom, and Ozra Khanom, who by taking photographs of women undermined the social ban on photographing Muslim women.³³ Subsequently, women begin to appear in studios (or with the presence of a female photographer) in other cities.³⁴

CONCLUSION

After the arrival of photography in Iran, issues surrounding the production of photographs of women and the incompatibility of European methods of representation were raised as social and religious taboos. The initial commitment of Iranian men and women to preserving Islamic dictates that require covering and protection from strangers prevented women from appearing in front of the camera of a strange man. The court photographers were not allowed to take photographs of women in the Imperial Photography Studio, and the women also were barred from going there. Next to the Imperial Photography Studio, which handled the court’s photographic affairs and where the court photographers worked, Naser al-Din Shah allocated a place in the harem as another studio just for the harem women. The Imperial Harem Studio was exclusively for the shah and these women, and its management was the responsibility of Amineh Aqdas, one of the influential wives of the harem. The taboo of photographing women was thus broken with the shah’s policy of creating a studio in the harem and employing the assistance of intimate confidantes and eunuchs in

order to take photographs of women. Only then could photographing women take hold and expand, albeit in compliance with the norms and beliefs of the time and place. This trend began first in the noble families and soon spread to the general public, with women appearing in public studios and even the sale of photographs of women by the end of the nineteenth century.

NOTES

- 1 Zoka, *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 47.
- 2 Ibid., 58.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 This studio was established in 1876 at the portal of the Dar al-Fonun polytechnic.
- 5 Sattari, *Manabe'*, 25.
- 6 'Abdolhosayn Khan Sepehr, *Yaddashtha*, 186.
- 7 Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 47.
- 8 Mohammadi Nameghi, *Zanan*, 131.
- 9 Taj al-Saltaneh, *Khaterat*, 77.
- 10 Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 24, 42.
- 11 Ja'far Qoli Khan, Nayer ol-Molk, was the shah's first assistant in taking photographs of the harem. He was the shah's brother-in-law and the librarian of Dar al-Fonun. Born in 1857, he graduated from Dar al-Fonun in the field of engineering. Ja'far Qoli Khan, Nayer ol-Molk, learned photography from the French photographer Jules Richard Khan (1816–91) (Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 80–82).
- 12 The courtier E'temad al-Saltaneh (1843–96) writes about this young man:
 "Wednesday 16 November 1881 [...] Muchul Khan is the son of Aqa Mohammad Khan and his mother is Tuti Khanom Hamadani, the shah's nanny. When the shah was a child, this servant from Hamadan, who served in the harem of the late Mahd-e 'Olya, was wedded to the footman of the harem, who was Aqa Mohammad Khan. This young man was born at the beginning of the shah's reign [1851] [...] As he was the nanny's son and had access to the harem, this boy came to the attention of the shah up to the time that he grew older and became a servant boy. Among the information about this child is that, as a servant boy, he took news of the harem outside and news of the outdoors to the harem [...] As he became a bit older, he was nearly thrown out of the harem. His mother saw a solution. At that time, the shah had taken up photography and took mostly photographs of the harem and the wives of the people who came to the royal harem. The shah was forgiving, and the mother introduced this familiar boy to Ja'far Qoli Khan, who is now the dean of the [Dar al-Fonun] school, but had no status then. This acquaintance was to his credit. They say he gave some of the pictures to others as well, but I do not think the account is true.
 Anyway, when the shah became bored of photography [the end of the first period and the beginning of a seven-year lapse], this youngster did not exhibit any curiosity toward it himself and reverted back to his childhood functions but in a different and more mature manner.

- In early 1873, Muchul Khan came in charge of the royal stables, which was considered an important duty in those days. He was also one of the attendants during the shah's travels to Europe in the years 1873 and 1878. He passed away in 1906 during the rule of Mozaffar al-Din Shah" (r. 1896–1907). E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Ruznameh*, 129.
- 13 'Aziz Khan Khawjeh is reported to have been a fair and beautiful eunuch. He was first the eunuch of 'A'esheh Khanom, one of Naser al-Din Shah's favorite concubines and became the eunuch of Amineh al-Soltan (1858–1907) in the year 1889. 'Aziz Khan Khawjeh accompanied the shah during his third trip to Europe in 1889. In his memoirs E'temad al-Saltaneh wrote on Friday, June 15, 1888 about the shah's return to photography, saying, "It is now some days since the shah has taken up photography. 'Aziz Khan Khawjeh is his assistant. He had quit for some time, and [now] he has taken it up again." E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Ruznameh*, 571.—While 'Aziz Khan Khawjeh was a eunuch in the shah's harem, Amin al-Soltan lured him and commissioned him with reporting the situation in the shah's harem. Naser al-Din found out and understood that 'Aziz Khan Khawjeh was a spy reporting the secrets of the harem. For this reason, he ousted him from the harem, presented him to Amin al-Soltan, and had his direct link to the harem completely severed. From 1889 onward, he became the eunuch of Amin al-Soltan. Bamdad, *Sharh*, II, 323.
 - 14 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 26.
 - 15 Shams al-'Emareh was designed by the Dust-'Ali Khan Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek family, its architect was the master 'Ali Mohammad Kashi. The prominence of the building is due to its height. Imitating the high-rise buildings in Europe, the shah ordered its construction in the eastern wing of the arg, the citadel, in 1868 to have a view of the cityscape. Zoka', *Tarikhcheh*, 271.
 - 16 Sattari, *Manabe'*, 20.
 - 17 E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Ruznameh*, 202.
 - 18 Zoka', *Tarikhcheh*, 242–254.
 - 19 Dust-'Ali Khan Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, *Yaddashtha*, 41.
 - 20 National Library and Archives Organization of Iranian Documents and, document number 295001223, retraction number 1R4A108, index number 00030603, document dated 1868, one sheet.
 - 21 Zobayda Khanom or Amineh Aqdas was a favorite sigheh of Naser al-Din Shah and the aunt of Malijak (Aziz al-Soltan, 1879–1940). Due to her supposed honesty she was given the title "Amineh Aqdas" (Trusted of the Sovereign), and Naser al-Din Shah's jewels were entrusted to her (Nashat, "Amīna Aqdads," 954–955).
 - 22 Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, *Safar-e avval*, 501.
 - 23 Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, *Safar-e dovvom*, 447.
 - 24 The sons of Mo'ayyer al-Mamalek, Dust-Mohammad Khan and Mirza Mohammad Khan Heshmat al-Mamalek, were the first amateur nobles and pioneers of photography; Zoka, *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 88).
 - 25 Mirza Ahmad Khan Sani' al-Saltaneh and his son Mirza Ebrahim Khan 'Akkasbashi (1874–1915) were photographers at the court of Mozaffar al-Din Shah. They accompanied the shah during his trips to Europe, and from the first trip in 1900 they brought back to Iran the first cinematography camera along with a number of other cameras. Zoka, *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 75; 114.

- 26 Mohammadi Nameghi, *Zanan*, 146; 164.
- 27 ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar was the second most famous and active Iranian photographer after Aqa Reza ‘Akkasbashi; Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, 108.
- 28 Image numbers 769, 775, and 976 in microfilm are available in the handwritten scripts in the Central Library and Documents Center of Tehran University.
- 29 Mohammadi Nameghi, *Zanan*, 192.
- 30 ‘Ayn al-Saltaneh, *Ruznameh*, 356.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 707.
- 32 A large number of such photographs can be found among the work of the German photographer Ernst Hoeltzer (1835–1911) and the Iranian-Armenian photographer Antoin Sevruguin (c. 1842–1933).
- 33 Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, 178.
- 34 Sane, *Paydayesh*, 29.

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- 4: Golestan Palace/Document Center, Document Number #42298.
- 5: Golestan Palace/Document Center, Document Number #46585.

THE PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS OF THE ROYAL GOLESTAN
PALACE: A WINDOW INTO THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF IRAN
DURING THE QAJAR ERA

“[B]y royal decree he should photograph acquaintances and strangers, ancient monuments and relics, to entertain His Auspicious Mind during his free time.”
(Qajar court chronicler recounting events of 1863)

The Golestan Palace in Tehran was the seat of the Qajar dynasty, which ruled Iran in 1785–1925.¹ Today there are 1,040 photograph albums containing nearly 42,500 photographs housed at the Golestan Palace photograph archives.² It appears that these albums have reached us today more or less intact since they were compiled in the Qajar royal house. One hundred sixteen shadow albums (containing nearly 5,000 photographs) have been made available for public viewing. The authors’ interests lie in methodological approaches to the uses of historical photographs in the forms of collections and large visual databanks as primary source materials for the study of social history. The Qajar photograph albums will act as case studies. While contextual historical information will be presented, this contribution does not aim to expound on the details of the groundbreaking events that have marked Iranian photohistory; rather, we intend to focus on the photograph albums compiled by court photographers and housed in the *Albumkhaneh-ye Saltanati* (Royal Album House) in Golestan Palace.³ While individual photographs have been addressed by various scholars, and the albums have received preliminary attention,⁴ they have not yet been examined systematically as a whole or within a socio-historical context.⁵ This void has not been due to lack of interest by photohistorians; rather it has been largely due to the inaccessibility and disorganized state of the albums housed in Golestan Palace, which have received minimal care until recently. We can state with confidence that the selections made available to the public are thematically representative of the overall collection. No definite statement about the germinal activities that led to what became an indigenous style of Iranian photography can be made until scholars receive the opportunity to examine the total treasure locked behind these closed doors. As such, the findings of this article, with its examination of 116 albums out of a pool of 1,040, must be viewed as a window opening onto a vaster heritage.

QUESTIONS

Photograph albums that reach us intact from some time in the past can be considered *visual microhistories* within the *macrohistories* of events that surround the “object.” The literature expounds on these two approaches to historiography: “[I]t is precisely at the intersection of the micro and the macro that empirical discovery takes place and new information is generated.”⁶

How does this translate into photohistorical terms? As we handle an image-object (album) composed of photographs, or images, or visual building blocks, we are faced with two sets of questions: a) how did contemporaneous owners of the albums relate to the photographs; and b) how do we use photographs as primary source material within the realm of social history? Ultimately, as photohistorians, whose objectives are methodological, we may ask how we can go beyond providing “pictures to match an event” or “pictures to match a person.”⁷

Taking photographs and amassing a collection of photographs (e.g., within and beyond Golestan Palace) entails choices: what and how to frame that which is seen and subsequently what and how to present it—and conversely what to frame and what not to. We are therefore faced with a selection process undertaken by individuals at a particular moment in history; as such, the collection itself carries its own “microhistory.” It is precisely this story that renders the two-dimensional surface of a photograph into three dimensions and allows the photohistorian to *enter* the photograph.⁸ The photohistorian enters a photograph through the *door* of a question structured by the goals and interests of their research.

What is our story, and through which door do we enter it?

OUR STORY

The Golestan Palace was part of the royal citadel complex, Arg-e Saltanati, which occupied a substantial terrain within the city of Tehran. In the mid-nineteenth century Tehran was divided into five municipal districts. The royal citadel was one of these districts. The first field cameras in Iran had reached the Arg by 1850.⁹

Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–1896) became king in 1848 at the age of 17, the same year that Karl Marx (1818–1883) published his *Communist Manifesto*, and he ruled a few years shy of half a century. He was the first Iranian monarch in history to have set foot on European soil, to have been photographed by Nadar (1820–1910), to have exchanged words with him “who had given up on his folly of flying hot air balloons and who was quite energetic and a humorous kind of fellow.”¹⁰ The shah was an avid supporter of photography, and an impressive number of photograph albums left behind in his palace still exist.

Our story begins with a French instructor being hired in 1858 to teach the king and a servant of his private quarters how to take photographs and to print them.¹¹ Soon thereafter, in 1862, one of the palace buildings was transformed into his darkroom: *'Akkaskhaneh-ye mobarakeh-ye homayuni* (The Exalted Royal Photography Atelier). The new position of "Court Photographer" was added to the roster of royal servants in 1863. The shah's classmate became the first court photographer. The same year, a new government journal, employing lithography and headed by the most talented court painter, began publication using photographs for its illustrations.¹² Other favoured servants, preferably eunuchs, were trained to print the photographs that the shah took of his wives. Perhaps most importantly of all, photography became a royal hobby entitled to draw funds from the national treasury. The shah's royal resolve had finally set in motion a series of events that ultimately resulted in an in-house (palace) photographic industry.

The first photography studio that provided service to the elite was established literally outside the eastern wall of the palace in 1867 by the first court photographer and his assistant.¹³ Along with chemistry and physics, as a scientific discipline, photography had become part of the curriculum of the country's first modern technical college by the late 1850s. Dar al-Fonun (Abode of Science) was built on grounds donated by Golestan Palace, also along the eastern wall of the palace complex. In 1867, along with a pharmacy, the Dar al-Fonun studio and darkroom were setup next door to the royal atelier. The backdoor opened onto the palace grounds. This studio benefited from royal patronage, and gradually, as the services of more graduates of the school were enlisted by the court, the two studios overlapped in responsibilities, carrying out royal orders for photographic documentation. By the 1880s the Dar al-Fonun studio, with its increasing clientele of extended royal family members, wealthy courtiers, and merchants, had surpassed the Royal Atelier in prominence, and it may have taken over or even replaced its royal counterpart by the end of the century.

A passage written by a court chronicler looking back at the appointment of the first court photographer invokes the sense of awe that surrounded *'elm-e 'akkasi* (the science of photography) at the time, and how this new occupation in fact became a means to climb the social ladder, to be in a privileged position granting the right to gaze at the *zat-e homayuni* (Royal Self), even to gravitate closer to the man himself:¹⁴

"[A]s his [Naser al-Din Shah's] gracious mind was set on the promotion and advancement of this science [photography], his sovereign self ... having been informed of this science, decided that one of the servants of the royal court and a trusted [man] from his private chambers should master this skill.... [B]y royal decree, he should photograph acquaintances and strangers [and] ancient monuments and relics to entertain his royal self during his free time. As such, Aqa Reza, his private servant who today [1295 *hejreh*/1878] is aide-de-camp and the royal purse

holder to be trusted and confided and who is one of the true servants born into the royal house, was ordered [by the shah] to learn this respected science, [and] benefitting from special royal attention, he mastered this science in a short time. Once the royal concern was pleased by this matter, honor was bestowed on the aforementioned, and for the propagation of this science and expansion of this deed, one of the royal buildings was [transformed into] the royal photography studio so that occasionally when free of work, [the shah] would visit the place to watch and to follow its progress. During the grand [royal] travels to places, such as Khorasan, Mazandaran, and the revered Karbala, all places, monuments and relics were photographed, *moraqqa' sakhteh* [turned into albums], and presented to his majesty, which he still has in his royal possession.”¹⁵

This first court photographer, Aqa Reza (1841–1889), was associated with the Royal Atelier for 27 years. He advanced in the ranks so far that he was appointed the head of artillery and gunpowder factories within the country (c. 1883).¹⁶ Behind the palace walls and within closed quarters, trust, skill, and a direct link to the inner court circles appear to have been the preconditions of becoming a court photographer.¹⁷

The court photographers and their assistants, busy compiling photograph albums, were keenly aware of competition with the artisans working at the *Majma'-e Dar al-Sanaye'* (an art center/workshop, est. 1852) in producing quality work to be presented to the shah. The workshop was located on the outer rim of the main bazaar in Tehran, just across the street from the southern gate of the Arg complex and all within walking distance. One could imagine the court painters and court photographers running past one another within the close quarters of the Arg, competing for royal attention. Among their many creative duties, the artists at the *Majma'-e Dar al-Sanayeh* assembled highly stylized *moraqqa'* (album). *Moraqqa' sazi* (album-making), along with bookbinding, were century-old professions in the country.¹⁸ Hence it appears that compiling photograph albums became an extension of this tradition.¹⁹

This brief sketch of seminal events that laid the ground for the advancement of photography in Iran is indicative of the fact that all roads led to the king—the *qibleh-ye 'alam* (Pivot of the Universe, one of his titles). It must be stressed that the parameters for any future implementation of photography were set the day that the first camera became royal property, and that it remained within the confines of the palace for over 30 years. This king-centered paradigm was to set the course of photography in Iran. The propagation of the new craft within society became a gradual trickle-down process along the social pyramid, and the first 100 years of Iranian photography were played out within the evolving dynamics of king and citizen.²⁰

OUR DOOR

Tehran became the capital city in the late eighteenth century. By the time the camera had arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, the royal citadel was the only section of town that had received attention. The Austrian medical doctor Polak who arrived around the same time observes: "On the whole, nothing in the city would remind the beholder of a metropolis [...]. When I arrived [...] in 1852 [...] even after passing through the gate [...] it seemed unbelievable to be standing before a residential city."²¹ His observations are corroborated by various European travelers who recorded their similar impressions.²² One of the first maps of the city also dates to 1852. Tehran was a city surrounded by a wall with 114 towers and four gates and a deep moat running parallel along its entire circumference. A medieval sense permeates the image portrayed by the map.²³

The first census of Tehran in 1852 states that, aside from the houses of the shah and those of his grand vizier, there were a total of 238 houses of *amir va khavanin* (high level courtiers), *nokar* (servants), *'ulama va fozala* (high level clerics), *ra'iyat* (plebeian/subjects), and Turkomans (referring to the Qajar clan); 17 mosques and religious sites; and 128 stores.²⁴ The 1869 census, carried out by a team of Dar al-Fonun students, provides more information: there were 195 houses in the Arg district with a total population of 3,014: 1,333 adult men, 890 adult women, 420 children (under the age of 5), and 371 youth (between the ages of 5–15). Of the adult male population, 744 were *aghayan* (notables/men of rank) and *kasabeh* (artisans, laborers, and tradesmen), 13 *gholam siyah* (black male attendants and servants), and 574 *nokar*. Of the adult female population, 676 were *zanan-e mohtarameh* (wives of men of rank), 99 *kaniz siyah* (black female servants), and 115 *khedmatkar* (maids). Of the total population of the Arg, 70 were from the Qajar clan, 182 were originally from Tehran, 76 from Isfahan, 194 from Iranian Azerbaijan, and 1,492 from other various parts of the country.²⁵

Leaving the royal microcosm within the Arg, expanding our scope acquaints us with the entire city following territorial expansion in 1869: the population of Tehran was 155,736, of which 8,478 were members of the *sepah* (military personnel), and 147,256 were *ra'iyat*. Of the total military personnel, 5,508 were soldiers, 1,148 *gholam-e pishkhedmat va gholam-e hazer-e rekab-e mobarak* (simple attendants and servants present at the royal stirrup), 700 gunners, 420 cavalrymen, 150 *zanburakchi* (cavalry on camels carrying miniature cannons), 133 military band members, and 121 *gholam-e makhsus* (high-ranking servants). Of the 147,256 *ra'iyat*, 101,893 were homeowners, and 45,363 renters; 53,972 were adult males, comprising 42,648 notables, artisans, and tradesmen; 756 *khawjeh* (eunuchs) and black attendants; and 10,568 servants. Of the 52,460 of the adult female population, 46,063 were wives of men of rank, artisans, and tradesmen; 2,525 female black attendants; and 3,872 maids. Of the total population, 2,008 were Qajars, 39,245 were from Tehran, 8,201 from Iranian Azerbaijan, and 87,847

from other various parts of the country (mostly from Kashan and other cities, such as Shiraz and Arak).²⁶

This demographic synopsis should impart a sense of the city and the world that surrounded the camera within and beyond the royal citadel.²⁷ For us, the value is in the language used to categorize the populace. As an image is associated with syntax, it can open a window into the prevalent worldview of the epoch—of the rulers, of those who served them, and how *they looked* at each other. What *we see* is a small city comprised of the shah, all his men with their associated entourages, and the rest. The rest were divided into *nokar* and *ra'iyat* (plural: *ro'aya*). A closer look reveals that *nokar* was a heavily nuanced word. Within the Arg, everyone served the shah; hence, even the nobles who served the shah qualified as *nokar*. What we have here is an elaborate ranking system of servitude, in which its gradation was calculated by the distance from the shah. As such, a *nokar* found himself with a higher ranking than “the rest” (i.e., a *ro'aya* who do not have access to the shah). This binary world thus found its own permutations across the realm.²⁸

Various texts, ranging from contemporaneous travelogues to recent socio-historical studies, can be consulted to obtain a better understanding of the prevalent social stratifications of the Qajar era. Without claiming to be definite, the authors propose the following schema as extrapolated from written texts:²⁹

- The dominant stratum: the shah; first degree princes; heads of tribes/clans; ministers and grand *mostowfi* (controllers, accountants); higher echelon of military; high-level clergy and those of whom were associated with the court; landowners (which included princes, provincial governors, and high-level clerics owning ten or more villages); and high-level merchants.
- The middle stratum: mid-level princes; provincial *mostowfi* and *monshi* (secretaries in charge of composing letters and communiqués); mid-level clergy (local); mid-level merchants; small-scale landowners (owning one village or parts of various villages, independent or related to the government); government employees; merchandise distributors; high-level servants and eunuchs associated with the court; high-level guilds of the bazaar, artisans, tradesmen, shopkeepers; low-level princes; low-level mullas.
- The inferior stratum: estranged princes (those having fallen out of favor with the shah); land laborers and farmers; migratory tent dwellers (including the Roma); semi-skilled artisans of the bazaar; travelling salespeople; servants; eunuchs; construction workers; troubadours, actors, and traveling entertainers.

We found similar vocabulary elsewhere in various texts of the epoch, promoting an all-pervasive binary division of society through the use of well-established, common literal expressions and syntax:

“[B]etween the notables and nobles (*a'yan va ashraf*), on the one hand, and the commoners or the masses (*avvām al-nas* or *ra'iyat*), on the other. The use of such terms of contrast as *khavas va avvām* (the elite and the masses), *aghniya va foqarā* (the affluent and the poor), and *aqvā va zu'afa* (the powerful and the meek), moreover, indicate an implicit awareness of the three main dimensions of inequality, i.e., social status, material resources, and power, respectively.”³⁰

Within this context one can pose the following questions: in the realm of Iranian social history, how was this societal stratification represented through the photography of the Qajar era? And within this realm, what added information, if any, is narrated by the photographs?

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS

The results of our content analysis of the shadow photograph albums has been summarized in Appendix 1 below. The thematic rundown has been separately presented, along with the photographers of the albums in Appendix 2. As we are not aware of the selection criteria employed by administrators of the Golestan Palace archive with regard to the shadow albums, we must be careful not to evoke overreaching conclusions. Nevertheless, the following general observations can be made:

- The dates of the albums range from 1857–1906, with greater frequency during the periods 1860–1870 and 1885–1895.³¹
- The earliest albums were from the Italian photographers: Luigi Pesce (1858); Antonio Giannuzzi (1858); and Luigi Montabone (1862).
- The earliest albums by Iranian photographers date from 1863–1864. The photographers were Naser al-Din Shah and his first court photographer Aqa Reza.
- The majority of (early) annotated photographs by Aqa Reza include additional remarks by Naser al-Din Shah.
- The documentation of Naser al-Din Shah’s travels, countrywide architectural heritage, cityscapes, and portraits of elite outnumber all other categories in frequency of occurrence.
- It is evident that effort was put into cataloguing the elites associated with the court. All photographs include written identification or subtitles.
- Photographs of the servant staff outnumber those of ordinary people living beyond the palace walls.

- There are an impressive number of photographs (over 300) of Naser al-Din Shah's wives and his life within his private quarters, most of which he took himself. The albums carry his annotations in his own handwriting. There are multiple cases of his own misidentifications crossed-out and corrections made. There are also multiple spelling errors.
- Besides Naser al-Din Shah, a total of 20 Iranian photographers have been identified. Photographs by unknown photographers still remain. Of the 20 known photographers, seven were court photographers, five military photographers, four public studio photographers, and four amateur photographers associated with the court. Various numbers of albums are associated with each photographer. Since we are dealing with a selection, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about photographers at large and the level of activities or connections with the court.
- There is a significant number of commissioned albums compiled with the specific goal of documenting the provincial governing body and the realm at large.
- The number of albums from the Naseri era far exceeds the subsequent Qajar kings, with insignificant numbers from the reigns of Mohammad-'Ali Shah (r. 1907–1909) and Ahmad Shah (1909–1925).³²
- A significant contrast can be observed between the photographic styles adhered to by court photographers during the Naseri and Mozaffari (1896–1907) eras. The two kings differed as to how they chose to compose themselves in front of the camera.
- Setting aside official photographs, increased thematic variation can be observed among photographs of the Mozaffari era. An ease to dare to experiment with new ideas is evident.
- An increasing number of staged humorous/comic photographs are found in albums of the Mozaffari era.
- Among the shadow albums, there are also those not dedicated to a single topic and spread over various dates. They appear to have been compiled from loose photographs, mostly of the Mozaffari era. It is not possible to assess with certainty whether they have been tampered with.
- Portraiture is the dominant genre followed closely by documentation of architectural heritage, palaces, and government buildings. There is a significant number of landscape photographs (urban/rural/natural) as well.
- While there are also photographs that do not have annotations, the albums have annotations, which fall into one of the following categories:
 1. Prelude or introductory notes as the first page of an album, describing the purpose for the compilation of the album, sometimes including associated decrees.

2. Explanatory texts accompanying each photograph, identifying those photographed.
3. Additional remarks (mostly by Naser al-Din Shah).

As there is a thematic overlap of categories as defined in the schema of social stratification above, it is difficult produce to a meaningful numeric quantification. With the overview of content, we can also define the following broader categories:

- Photographs taken within the Arg
 1. *Andaruni* (private quarters of the king)
 2. *Biruni* (public quarters of the palace complex)
- Photographs taken outside the Arg
 1. In the presence of the shah and during his travels
 2. Commissioned photograph albums documenting the realm

or:

- Albums pertaining to the Naseri era
- Albums pertaining to the Mozaffari era

The world as the Qajar monarchs knew it was violently shattered in 1896 when Naser al-Din Shah was shot in the chest at point blank range while praying in a shrine south of Tehran. As the victim of the first regicide by a man off the street in the history of Iran, his assassination was to be an omen for a decade-long series of events that eventually resulted in limiting the absolute powers of the king through a constitution in 1906. An analysis of their content reveals the traces of changing times of late nineteenth-century Iran in the photograph albums of the Mozaffari era. The unraveling of a king-centered paradigm ran parallel to the virtuosity of photographic styles in portraiture. Experimentation with new genres of photography (in particular staged scenes) behind palace walls and within the circle of courtiers is evident. In line with our goal to achieve insight into the social stratifications of the Qajar era, we have chosen to focus on the albums of the Naseri era, as they comprise most of the albums and are thematically more relevant.³³

The content analysis of the sample collection of photograph albums presented above points toward a world enclosed within the palace walls—one that appears to have been more or less oblivious to life beyond its confines. The albums provide a relatively thorough account of the visual spaces within which the Qajar monarchs spent their days. These limits demarcated the radius around the shah and his daily activities. The camera belonged to him, and the court photographers were his employees; as such, the photographs reflect him and only him. Interest in his own realm is revealed through the photographic expeditions commissioned by the court. During the days of large field cameras, glass plate negatives, and rudimentary roads and means of transportation, these forays into the hinterlands and beyond were indeed

time consuming and costly. The negatives were brought back to the capitol, contact-printed onto albumen paper, selections were made, photographs mounted, subtitles written, calligraphers brought on board for inscribing the annotations, and finally turned into albums by bookbinders. While all albums did not receive the same level of attention and meticulous craftsmanship throughout the years, an extensive technical apparatus lay hidden behind the royal preoccupation with photography.³⁶ The beautifully handwritten prologues at the opening of each album are further indicative of tacit competition among a gradual growing network of photographers for the “honor” of being sent on such expeditions and to set these “unworthy gifts” at the feet of the Pivot of the Universe. Henceforth, based on the content analysis of the shadow albums, we propose a binodal conceptual framework that would assist us in our narrative analysis of this large body of photographs and albums: “Within and Beyond the Arg.”

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE: WITHIN THE ARG

We shall proceed chronologically, emphasizing the first photographers and the first photograph albums as precedents to the ensuing body of work assembled by various photographers (Appendix 2). With camera in hand, the students of the French tutor began roaming the palace grounds. Like all first-time photographers they pointed their cameras at their surroundings. Free from protocol and calm within private quarters, a semblance of childlike enthusiasm is evident in the early photographs, taken by both the 31-year-old Naser al-Din Shah and the 21-year-old Aqa Reza who posed for each other. Their paths separate at one point—at the border of the *andaruni* and the *biruni*. Only the king can enter *his* private world of *his* wives.

ANDARUNI: PRIVACY WITHIN THE PALACE COMPLEX

The photographer of albums 210, 215, 289, and 362, which contain nearly 300 photographs, was Naser al-Din Shah. Within his private sanctum, he pointed the camera at himself, his wives, servants, and the restricted daily traffic of various guests of his different wives in the palace’s *andaruni* (interior—the private quarters to be shielded from the eyes of male strangers). It had a relatively vast courtyard yet cramped quarters. With many wives, who each had her own staff of servants and set of daily guests, the preponderance of *gholambacheh-ha* (child servants), who carried out routine daily chores and played with the royal children, and *kanizha* (female servants) appears stifling. As to be expected, everyone was more than willing to take part in the king’s joyful follies of recording their faces for eternity. Group photographs of



— 1: A group of our wives and Anis al-Dowleh's guests, the children, and kanizha, photographed and annotated by Naser al-Din Shah, Album 210, no. 7-1 (after 1859).

20 or more around (fig. 1). With male presence restricted to underage boys, *khawjeh-ha* (eunuchs), and perhaps old fathers of favorite wives on special occasions, Naser al-Din Shah was the dominant male force among the multitude of women. A blind mulla was brought in to assist devout wives with their religious practices.

The insistence on totally removing strangers' eyes has limitations when it comes to printing photographs and regulating who eventually sets eyes on the images. This matter assumes greater gravity when one is confronted with the more *osé* photographs taken of the women. Keeping a medium conducive to multiple copies under control was indeed a formidable task. As this was a private matter, it has remained cloaked in mystery to this day. We have only anecdotal sources and our own assumptions to go by (e.g., eunuch assistants printing the photographs). As copies of the photographs appear to have found their way outside the private quarters, we can only imagine a breach of loyalty.³⁷ However, the seriousness of the matter was sensed by his wives, and recent research in the documents of Golestan Palace indicates that not only did a number of wives pick up photography as a hobby, but also one of his charismatic wives took up the task of imposing discipline and scrutinizing the traffic of the Royal Atelier.³⁸

A scrapbook pasted together by Naser al-Din Shah stands out among the above mentioned albums. Each page is covered with various photographs cut to different sizes, with complete annotations in his own handwriting, explaining the images and with many spelling and grammatical errors. The photographs cover an almost 20-year period (c. 1860–1880). An aging monarch is looking back in time, narrating his life in words and in pictures: self-portraits in his early 30s—young, energetic, and willing to dress up for the occasion in full official attire; and self-portraits in his late 40s—comfortable in his ways, having gained weight, looking disheveled, and sporting a crooked cap. He is imaginative and creative as he pastes together a day in the life of an older king and his younger wives, under the eyes of his trusted, aging eunuch (fig. 2).³⁹ The



— 2: Page from scrapbook, photographed and annotated by Naser al-Din Shah, Album 289, no. 4, ranging from 1864–1879.

two individual portrait photographs are of his wives. The photograph of the young woman to the left of the king was taken ten days after their recent wedding. The two women photographed together are the wives of princes. Clearly, the king's self-proclaimed rights bypassed traditional norms, and his eyes were allowed to fall onto the wives of others.⁴⁰ Comprising 100 photographs (1864), Album 362 is a compilation of studio photographs taken by Naser al-Din al-Shah of his wives, a number of female guests, and his children (daughters and sons), all of whom he has identified.⁴¹

Unlike his court photographers, who had a specific list of responsibilities to meet, Naser al-Din Shah had only himself to please. His photographic oeuvre is embellished with his own annotations, and his albums are essentially autobiographical and self-portrayals. We see a private man living in a private world, selective in his entourage, more at ease with his servants and his wives than with courtiers, and selective in what he chooses to frame and to see.

BIRUNI: DAILY TRAFFIC WITHIN THE PALACE GROUNDS

Following the monarch on his daily outings within the Arg and his hunting escapades, albums 188 and 189 (1862–1864) contain the earliest photographs by Aqa Reza. Album 188 catalogs men who served the king on a daily basis inside the Arg. Each photograph is a close-up portrait with simple but meticulously decorated margins, indicative of the first attempts by the Royal Atelier to produce photograph albums for royal scrutiny. The album begins with portraits of the monarch. These photographs are framed within elaborate illuminated margins, in an attempt to invoke the sense of a tableau. One group portrait taken at the Royal Atelier shows Naser al-Din Shah and a number of his *pishkhedmat* (attendants), standing together in relaxed poses: one holds a tray of apples, one a tray of tea, one sits at his feet, one holds a mirror, and another twists his moustache (fig. 3). Another print of the same photograph appears in Naser al-Din Shah's scrapbook. Aqa Reza's written comments add to the overall comic mood of the photograph, informing us that the day the photograph was taken, "[T]he blessed left foot of the shah was suffering from blisters (boils)." In turn, Naser al-Din Shah added his own comments under the photograph, using derogatory terms to identify his entourage.⁴²

Another one of Aqa Reza's first photographs found its way into the king's scrapbook. It is an extremely valuable photograph, depicting one of the first encounters of notable men of the realm with the camera, and exposing a highly personalized relationship between the monarch and an expanded retinue of officials whom he called his *nokarha* (exalted servants) (fig. 4). The king's men are standing in line in the *biruni* of Golestan Palace, ranging from his foreign minister to his grand *Mostowfi al-Mamalek* (highest ranking *mostowfi*) and the head of the military. The Grand Vizier is absent, as



— 3: Naser al-Din Shah and servants of private quarters photographed in the Royal Atelier, photographer Aqa Reza, Album 188, no. 1, 1864.

the post had been abolished.⁴³ A samovar is in the foreground; in charge of the royal mint, the wealthiest man in the country is holding a tray of apples; the young man next to him is carrying a tray of tea; and the foreign minister appears to be holding a bouquet of flowers. In his own handwriting, once again, the shah identifies every single man. This is one of the rare photographs of Naser al-Din Shah, posing with his officials. Throughout his life he operated the camera or posed alone and in the company of his trusted servants, whether in the palace, on travels, or during lengthy hunting trips.⁴⁴ His photographs were not meant to be circulated or have copies made as souvenirs for those who were photographed in his company. An official royal portrait, *temsal-e homayuni*, was to be bestowed only on the chosen few. The rest of the other photographs were to be kept safe within the albums of the *Albumkhaneh-ye Saltanati*.

As the appointed court photographer, Aqa Reza was ordered to photograph both acquaintances and strangers. This order became a guideline for all subsequent court



— 4: Naser al-Din Shah with ministers and notables, annotated by Naser al-Din Shah, photographer Aqa Reza, Album 289, no. 26-3, 1862.

photographers. Portrait photographs of men of the realm were abounding. He began photographing the king's immediate entourage: the servants and workers of the palace grounds; the king's sons, princes, cousins; governors; courtiers; and court entertainers (musicians, clowns, and performers). Either in the courtyard or in the Royal

Atelier, one by one, face by face, along a linear trajectory extending from the king and radiating outward, Aqa Reza placed the camera in front of the king's different *nokarha* for the first time as they treaded into the *biruni* of the Arg complex.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE OUTSIDE THE ARG: IN STUDIOS

A substantial number of photographs that have reached us from the Qajar era were taken in studios outside the Arg. The experimental studio portraiture of the early days of the Royal Atelier, or makeshift sets in the palace courtyard, triggered among the urban elite the gradual demand for photographic portraiture (dominant and middle strata as indicated above Appendix 1: E). The Dar al-Fonun studio left an indelible mark on the history of Iranian studio portraiture, and its photographs abound in all public archives and private collections. Many high-ranking notables of the provinces passing through the capitol city would stop by the studio and have their portraits made. A number of privately-owned photography studios in Tehran and a few in the main cities of the provinces had begun operation by the late 1870s. The Dar al-Fonun studio continued to enjoy popularity among the elite throughout the Naseri era. A number of photograph albums in the Golestan Palace photograph archives are collections of studio portraiture of these men and their extended entourages.⁴⁵

Album 124 is a collection of Dar al-Fonun studio portrait photographs that may have been taken by various photographers associated with the studio (c. 1885), all of whom worked under the tutelage of ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar (1850–1912)—a graduate of Dar al-Fonun, who had also spent some time in Austria studying various photographic, printing, and lithographic techniques. Interestingly, this album is dedicated to the retinue and servants of nobles. They are either all men or children (boys and a number of girls). One would imagine that the owner of the portraits received a copy of his photograph before copies were pasted for royal scrutiny. Each page in the album carries four photographs. What is striking from our present perspective is the language used to identify the owner of the photographs. The individuals have been identified by their first names and their relationship to the “master,” for example, x bookkeeper of y, x calligrapher of y, x *mostowfi* of y, x son of y bookkeeper of z, x child of y servant of z, x tutor of y, x clerk of deceased y, and x cousin of y head of the stables of artillery. Perhaps most striking from (once again) a present-day point of view is the use of a possessive adjective connoting ownership: x person (*adam-e*) of y (fig. 5) or x and y persons (*adamha-ye*) of z. In other words, the identity of the person being photographed (x) is defined by his servile relation to y, and his existence finds value through this association, no matter how far back one must reach. While posing for their portraits, their images are eclipsed.



— 5: Adam-e hazrat-e Zell al-Soltan, son of Naser al-Din Shah, Dar al-Fonun Studio, Album 124, no. 3-3, c. 1885.

Mirza Sayyed ‘Ali (active c. 1875) was one of the most prominent *mostowfis* of the Naseri court.⁴⁶ He was also an amateur photographer. As a man of relative wealth, he appears to have setup his own studio. As he had access to men of rank, he chose to photograph them and give their portraits to them as gifts, thus forging strong ties with a wide range of notables. In 1885, while working as an assistant to his father as the *mostowfi* of the royal museum (among other assignments), he prepared a compilation of 64 mounted studio portraits of various contemporaneous *mostowfis* in the service of the king (Album 275). He presented the album as a gift to Naser al-Din Shah. The men were each photographed twice in official attire: once seated and once standing (fig. 6). Their body language—hands folded on their stomachs and standing in reverence—connotes that the subjects being photographed were aware of the inspecting eye of the king. Whenever possible, loyalty was stressed through annotations,



— 6: Mirza Mohammad Eqbal al-Molk Mostowfi, son of Mir Hosayn Mirza Baba, photographer Mirza Sayyed ‘Ali, album 275, no.7, 1885.

highlighting ancestral lineage that alluded to years of familial service. One is reminded of the *Mostowfi al-Mamalek* of the time. He was appointed to office at 12 years of age, inheriting his exalted position after the death of his father.⁴⁷ Cataloguing his peers was to be a prelude to a more ambitious project. The same year Mirza Sayyed ‘Ali embarked on photographing the nobles of the Qajar tribe. He compiled eight albums comprising over 360 photographs.⁴⁸ The first page of each album indicates that this photographic documentation project was carried out by the order of Naser al-Din

Shah in the year of the Tiger 1308/1890. Each album begins with the same portrait of the head of the tribe ('Azad ol-Molk) who is at times seated or standing. Then a group portrait of those to be shown in subsequent pages is presented as a preview. Each person is then photographed twice individually: once again, one seated and one standing, all posing in front of the same backdrop. While conscious of their preferential status among the elite with no hint of servile obedience in their pose, they stand in reverence. The meticulous and orderly presentation carries the sign of a man who was an accountant by profession. The following year Mirza Sayyed 'Ali Khan was granted the title *E'temad-hozur* (Trusted in His [Royal] Presence). While going through his photographs we can see governing by virtue. We are reminded of the photographs of the royal levée, now held through their virtual presence. Multitudes would stand reverently in line before His Royal Presence, now embodied in a framed photograph, placed on a chair, and elevated above the heads of the bemused crowd.

ON THE ROAD: BEYOND THE PALACE WALLS

Before becoming kings and adapting to the sedentary life of the capitol city, the Qajars were composed of nomadic Turkoman tribes, roaming the south shores of the Caspian Sea. Even though the Qajar Dynasty had reigned for over fifty years by the time Naser al-Din Shah took power, he seems to have inherited the desire to roam from his ancestors. He spent much of his time on the road on lengthy hunting excursions in tents and far from the Arg. Almost all the court photographers have produced their own versions of the king's travels into the hinterlands. Following him as members of his large retinue with a mobile darkroom, they would circulate around his encampment, photographing the events; printing photographs along the way; and within the seclusion of natural settings, showing pictures to him as the days unfolded. The Italians were pioneers in photographing the realm for the Shah and had set the preliminary standards for photographing architectural heritage (1857–1862).⁴⁹ However, the hunting escapades and the occasional royal travels to different parts of the country were to become the prelude to photographic documentation projects commissioned by the king and his Premier as of c. 1875.

As early as 1863 Aqa Reza (and others later on) carried his camera to the rooftops, positioning himself around the Arg and pointing his lens in all four geographical directions toward the cityscape outside the walls of the citadel (Albums 281 and 324). Naser al-Din Shah keenly followed Aqa Reza's acrobatic endeavors while meticulously annotating every single photograph of Tehran that was brought to his attention.⁵⁰ It appears that the real potential of the camera as a roaming eye, constructing and transmitting the surrounding world, was appreciated when 'Abbas-'Ali Bayk was sent to photograph the holy Shi'i sites in present-day Iraq in 1865 (Album 293), a year ahead

of the planned pilgrimage of Naser al-Din Shah and his mother.⁵¹ Twenty years later the court photographers had mastered the task of documenting people and places. Their albums were and remain to this day invaluable sources of information with regard to local political apparatuses, architectural heritage, government buildings, cityscapes, and landscapes of the regions to which they were sent; each topic requires a separate study to bring fully to light the various photographers' different styles and modes of depiction. While Aqa Reza remains a name to contend with, the works of Joseph Papazian (c. 1875), 'Abdi (c. 1890), and Abolqasem Nuri (1887–1905) stand out among the shadow albums for the genre of architectural photography (Appendix 2). With regard to producing documentary photograph albums covering all grounds and complete with well-researched secondary information, Sardar 'Ali Khan Vali (1845/46–1902/3, albums: c. 1880–1890), 'Abdollah Qajar (c. 1875–1895), and Amir Khan Jalil al-Dowleh (Mozaffari era, c. 1900) have excelled among their peers.⁵²

Once the camera was on the road, far from the physical presence of the king and beyond the confines of palace walls and the vast encampments, the court photographers were faced with the task of documenting peoples and places. They had the chance to bring forth the faces beyond the confines and to open a window into the human landscape. An early photograph of Aqa Reza on a trip to the Caspian province of Mazandaran vividly shows this sense of reaching out to those faces, as though through a telescope (fig. 7).⁵³

Two commissioned photograph albums (240 and 291) from 'Abdollah Qajar deserve special attention. As indicated on the first page of Album 240, he received orders in 1891 to photograph the border towns and villages of the eastern province of Khorasan. The towns were specified, and the local authorities were given strict orders to prepare amenities and to protect his retinue. He was also granted permission to photograph according to his judgment. The work was finalized and annotated by a professional calligrapher and presented to the shah in 1893.⁵⁴ It is worth noting that Antonio Giannuzzi (1858–1859: Album 304) and Aqa Reza (1866: Album 142) had photographed the same route.

Turning the pages of the two albums, we are taken aback by the architectural heritage and government buildings that have been meticulously documented page after page, replete with information including the dimensions of the building, geographical coordinates, history of the site, distance from the holy city of Mashad, population statistics, local beliefs, and interesting anecdotes. Patiently moving towards the center of the province, passing through various human enclaves, and photographing with large field cameras set on tripods, it is understandable that the project required two years to complete (from photographing, printing and annotating, to bookbinding). The governing apparatus of each enclave had been documented, starting from the most superior to the lowest ranks and moving from individual portraits to group portraits as one descends the power ladder. We are confronted with multiple



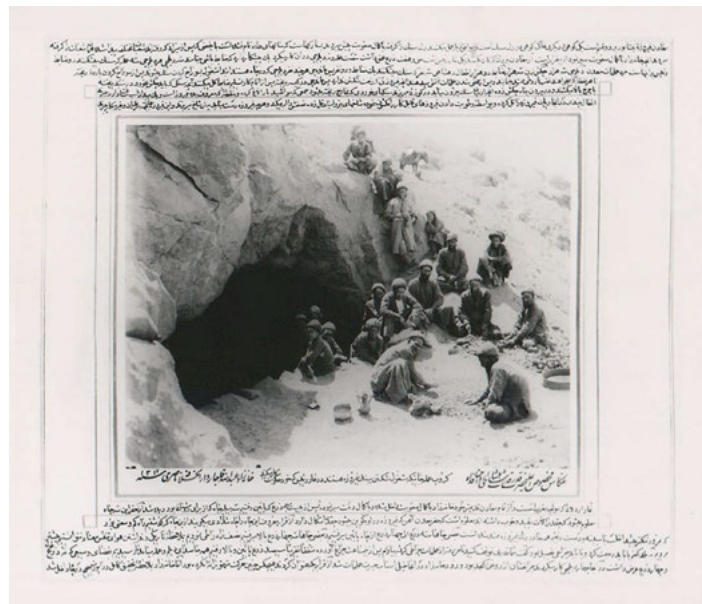
— 7: Photograph of ro'āya, men and women of Shekarkuh situated in Kelardasht during the sojourn of the Royal Encampment, Photographer Aqa Reza, 1865, Album 220, Golestan Palace, Photo Archive. — 8: Head of military outpost, photographer 'Abdollah Qajar, album 240, no. 6, 1891–1892.



— 9: Group portrait of village headman and elders of Kalat [Naderi], photographer ‘Abdollah Qajar, album 240, no. 38, 1891–1892. — 10: Group portrait of the management of the Telegraph House of the city of Mashad, photographer ‘Abdollah Qajar, album 291, no. 117, 1891–1892.

centers of local power—from cities, towns, villages to isolated military outposts—boasting their own retinues of servants and dependents. All men have been identified from the higher ranks with the rest becoming anonymous faces gazing at the camera. ‘Abdollah Qajar’s dexterity in preparing outdoor makeshift studios with a delicate sense of improvised aesthetics is indeed commendable.

Knowingly posing for the king, the subjects of his portraits can be summarized as follows: the superiors (of various sorts, depending on the vastness of their jurisdiction and ranging from governors to the heads of military garrisons, fig. 8); the associated nobles, their sons and their servants; local clerics and *sadat* (descendants of the Prophet Mohammad and the imams); the town or village headman and elders (fig. 9); merchants; post office and telegraph personnel (fig. 10); and wherever available local glitterati (doctors, princes, Cossacks and their families, foreign engineers, foreign emissaries—British and Russian—and human “oddities”). Close-up portraits of ordinary people are rare and numbered (“scenes and types”). Having stumbled on ‘Abdollah Qajar’s path, they were photographed in large groups (fig. 11). The ordinary man was photographed outside the circles of local power. His face was interlaced among photographs of key places and important faces; dispersed among crumbling architectural heritage; or simply standing upright as a human measure stick next to ancient monuments. He can barely be discerned in the longshot views of adobe villages, curi-



___ 11: Members of the Zafaranlu tribe, photographer 'Abdollah Qajar, Album 240, no. 107, 1891-1892. ___ 12: Laborers at turquoise mine, 'Abdollah Qajar, Album 291, no. 72, 1891-1892.

ously gazing from rooftops or toiling in the mines as an anonymous laborer (fig. 12). He was virtually non-existent. These men and women were oblivious to the looming presence of the king.

SOME ANSWERS

Content analysis has provided us with the possibility of examining many photographs to extract prevalent thematic categories. With this contribution, we have attempted a relatively precise overview of the large visual databank stored within the shadow albums of the Golestan Palace photograph archives. It has exposed a king-centered paradigm of photography within a highly personalized world of inter-relationships and an inflated sphere of royal property affecting all human interactions, in particular between the sitter and the photographer. The analysis also provided us with the possibility to refine the boundaries of our query based on our particular areas of interest, notably social history. Therefore, we focused on the photograph-rich Naseri era.

Thematic categorization invoked a conceptual framework within which to situate our ensuing narrative analysis of the individual photographs and albums: a binodal separation, a bifocal imaging, and a bivocal storytelling. The cartography and demography of the capital city as conveyed by contemporaneous maps and censuses (1852 and 1869) were examined. They yielded valuable information (with visual underpinnings) in regard to the urban and macrosocietal contexts in which the photographs were taken and the albums compiled.⁵⁵ The language used to categorize the city dwellers in these sources opened a window onto the prevalent binary or dual world vision espoused by the ruler and his subjects, a matter further corroborated by contemporaneous historiography. Textual data en masse revealed how king and subject saw each other, and how they gauged each other within public visual space. Based on this nuanced observation we embarked on the examination of the cultural codes and narratives imbedded within the individual images. Simultaneously, the microhistories of the photograph albums were extracted from the background histories of the photographers, the dates of the oeuvre, the introductory notes on the first pages of the albums (wherever available), and any additional annotations in the forms of subtitles or remarks. The abundance of handwritten remarks by Naser al-Din Shah himself provided additional insights into the monarch's state of mind as he returned to the images and examined the photographs. As such, sociohistorical contextualization took place at the juncture of the micro and the macro: as we oscillated between content and narrative analysis, as we move from the picture to the album and finally to the archive, from within the Arg to outside it, from spaces dominated by the physical presence of Naser al-Din Shah to spaces void of his physical presence yet still dominated by his

virtual presence. All this took place within our mental spaces as photohistorians, attempting to visualize and to perceive aspects of Iranian society in a certain moment in time. Did photographs shed light on the social stratifications of the Naseri era?

As the research was image-based, and the photographs were read as written texts, the answers lie in the fact that the choices the photographers made framed the human landscape. The premise of our research was defined by the presence of a photographer-king along with his appointed court photographers in an interplay between *shah-nokar-ra'iyat* (king-servant-subject). We used *their* (the king's and his photographers') photographs. The images reinforced the notion of a binary societal division yet with added nuances. The photographs allow us to see and read the divisions with a new vocabulary:

1. *You and me*: the royal, private self facing all others within the confines of the Arg.
2. *Us and them*: the royal self expanding to include his *nokarha* while facing the *ro'aya* beyond the palace walls.
3. *Shadowed identities and eclipsed self-images*: further down the hierarchy, presence of a certain rank is acknowledged only through association with figures higher up.
4. *Non-existence through exclusion*: the choice to not see, not record, and not identify.
5. *Virtual presence*: the royal self permeating all strata.

From a photohistorical standpoint, nineteenth-century Iranian photography underwent a lengthy incubation period within the palace walls. These walls were never truly circumvented, even within photography studios, natural settings, and on the roads beyond its boundaries. The first camera was placed in the lap of the king in his own house. He picked up the camera on his own time and did with it as he pleased. He passed on the camera to a trusted servant to do as he was told. While the agenda may have been dictated by the king, the photographers' modes of depiction became reflective of a prevalent social mindset that espoused stratification. Hence photography became an act of visually archiving and categorizing the royal subjects. Within an archival paradigm, the photograph albums of Golestan Palace became a "photographic index of the social body" of Qajar era Iran.⁵⁶

Appendix 1: The content of shadow photograph albums of the Golestan Palace photograph archive

- A Naser al-Din Shah with entourage, mostly servants.
- B *Andaruni* (private quarters within the palace): king's wives (mainly of Naser al-Din Shah); life within the harem; and staff: servants; eunuchs; *gholam bacheh* (page boys); and *kaniz* (female servants).
- C Commissioned documentary photography (court photographers sent to different parts of the country to photograph): buildings; towns and cities; tribes; local governors and local elites; key religious figures; and human oddities en route.
- D Palace staff: servants and entertainers (clowns, performers, and musicians).
- E Elite: princes and princesses; notables; high-level clergy; governors; *mostowfi*; merchants; military (from the capital city and the provinces); and studio and outside group photographs.
- F *Biruni* (palace public quarters): elite traffic and servants.
- G Architectural heritage, urban fabric: city gateways; prominent buildings, mosques, shrines, mausoleums; cityscapes (Tehran and various cities); port cities; and cemeteries.
- H Rural fabric: towns; villages; and natural landscapes.
- I Human landscapes: people other than the royal entourage and elite; ethnographic documentation; professions; haphazard faces confronted on the royal travel routes or hunting escapades; faces that attracted the king's attention; laborers; tribes (men and women), different ethnicities, and Roma.
- J Hunting escapades: royal encampments in nature with associated staff, entourage, and the hunted game.
- K Royal travels within the country: royal encampments en route with associated staff and entourage; local palaces, governors; key religious figures, elites, and buildings en route.
- L Palaces: royal buildings at various sites, gardens, and restorations.
- M Miscellaneous: Dar al-Fonun (buildings, photography studio, and staff); foreign dignitaries; photographs of paintings; royal European travels; the one and only locomotive in the country in use on a 15-km railway from Tehran to Rayy; French archeological excavations in Susa; and the gunpowder and ammunition factory.
- N Ceremonies: royal levées; weddings; religious *rowzeh-khvani*; passion plays called *ta'ziyeh*; public Shi'i mourning in the month of Moharram; joyous religious occasions; Friday prayers; horseraces; and *ashkhoran*.³⁴
- O Human "oddities": dervishes; very old men and women; people with physical abnormalities or birth defects; mentally ill; wrestlers; prisoners; and little people.
- P Naser al-Din Shah's son Mozaffar al-Din Shah (two albums of single photographs of the succeeding kings, Mohammad-'Ali Shah and Ahmad Shah).
- Q Staged (comic) scenes.

Appendix 2: Photographers of the shadow albums of the Golestan Palace photograph archive³⁵

	Photographer	Album (No. of photographs)	Year	Subject Matter
1	Luigi Pesce	335 (36)	1857–1858	G
	Luigi Pesce	911 (22)	1858–1859	G
2	Antonio Giannuzzi	304 (22)	1858–1859	G
3	Luigi Montabone	302 (29)	1862	A, D, E, G, M
	Luigi Montabone	374 (58)	1862	A, D, E, G, M
4	Naser al-Din Shah	210 (—)	—	A, B, D, N, O
	Naser al-Din Shah	215 (36)	1866–1868	A, B, E
	Naser al-Din Shah	289 (128)	1864–1881	A, B, E
	Naser al-Din Shah	362 (100)	1864	A, B, E
	Naser al-Din Shah with Aqa Reza	682 (35)	Miscellaneous photographs, some date 1858–1862	A, B, D, L
5	Aqa Reza	189 (67)	1862	A, D, E, J
	Aqa Reza	188 (60)	1863–1864	A, D, E, J
	Aqa Reza	251 (28)	1863–1864	L, N
	Aqa Reza	297(32)	1863–1864	A, D, J, L
	Aqa Reza	324 (—)	1863	F, L, Tehran cityscapes
	Aqa Reza (probably)	232 (23)	1864	B, J
	Aqa Reza	130 (102)	1865	K
	Aqa Reza	133 (117)	1865	A, D, E, O
	Aqa Reza	190 (43)	1865	H, J, O
	Aqa Reza	220 (80)	1865	K
	Aqa Reza	365 (50)	1865	E
	Aqa Reza	142 (90)	1866	K, O
	Aqa Reza	281 (—)	1863–1867	F, L, Tehran cityscapes
	Aqa Reza	144 (23)	1875	F, G, L
	Aqa Reza	321 (25)	1868	I, J, O
	Aqa Reza	171 (101)	1870	I, K, holy Shi‘i sites of present-day Iraq
	Aqa Reza	248 (85)	1870	F, I, K, M
	Aqa Reza	99 (6)	1878	L
	Aqa Reza	94 (56)	1879	H, I, J

	Aqa Reza	169 (56)	1889	I, J
	Aqa Reza (probably)	320 (24)	—	D, E, J, L, O
6	Soltan Ovays	95 (8)	1865	G
7	‘Abbas-‘Ali Bayk	293 (79)	1869	C, holy Shi‘i sites of present-day Iraq
8	Joseph Papazian	199 (38)	c. 1875	G
9	Agaiantz	292 (—)	c. 1880	E, G
10	Aqa Bozorg	309 (12)	1881	Military personnel
11	Sardar ‘Ali Khan Vali	294 (69)	1886–1887	G
12	Mirza Ahmad	97 (34)	1886–1887	E
	Mirza Ahmad	90 (34)	1888–1889	E, G, M, O
	Mirza Ahmad	330 (10)	1890	E, G, M
	Mirza ‘Abdolbaghi	288 (8)	1891	E, G
13	Mirza Hosali with ‘Abdollah Qajar	296 (82)	1883	K, O
	Mirza Hosayn-‘Ali	284 (18)	1885	H
	Mirza Hosayn-‘Ali	285 (25)	1887	A, D, L
	Mirza Hosayn-‘Ali	159 (28)	1888	K, O
	Mirza Hosayn-‘Ali	148 (36)	1889	I, J, N
	Mirza Hosayn-‘Ali	326 (42)	1889	D, E, G, H, K, N
14	‘Abdollah Qajar	124 (96)	1886	E
	‘Abdollah Qajar	207 (84)	1887	D, E, G, H, L
	‘Abdollah Qajar	208 (50)	1887	C
	‘Abdollah Qajar	298 (—)	1889	C
	‘Abdollah Qajar	240 (150)	1893	C
	‘Abdollah Qajar	291 (117)	1894	C
	‘Abdollah Qajar	167 (20)	1895	G, E, I
	‘Abdollah Qajar	163 (76)	—	G, O
	‘Abdollah Qajar	202 (57)	—	A, E, G, M, O
	‘Abdollah Qajar	209 (38)	—	G
	‘Abdollah Qajar	97 (5)	—	G
	‘Abdollah Qajar and Mohammad Hasan Qajar	1242 (19)	Various dates, 1888–1896	G, I
15	Manuchehr	401 (51)	1888	P, G, L (crown prince Mozaffar al-Din Mirza)
	Manuchehr	1403 (11)	1890	P, E (crown prince Mozaffar al-Din Mirza)

16	Various European photographers	1323 (11)	1891	Naser al-Din Shah's third trip to Europe
17	Mirza Sayyed 'Ali	125 (62)	c. 1890	E
	Mirza Sayyed 'Ali	275 (64)	1891	E
18	'Abdi	222 (16)	1893–1894	E, G, I, N
19	Yusef	118 (50)	1893	K, E, O
	Yusef	120 (50)	1894	K, third volume of four volume documentation
	Yusef	121 (50)	1894	K, L, N
20	Mirza Ebrahim Khan Sani' al-Saltaneh	450 (25)	1895–1897	J, L, M, N
	Mirza Ebrahim	1097 (10)	1896	P, E (Mozaffari)
	Mirza Ebrahim	1414 (4)	1897	N, military personnel
	Mirza Ebrahim and Manuchehr	1386 (9)	Various dates 1896–1898 and 1902	E, N, M
	Mirza Ebrahim 'Abdollah Qajar	1217 (14)	1900	P
	Mirza Ebrahim	1415 (12)	1906	P, G, Q
	Mirza Ebrahim	1238 (11)	—	G, I, Q
	Mirza Ebrahim	1387 (10)	—	P, L
21	Amir Khan Jalil al-Dowleh	437 (24)	1896–1897	G, Naser al-Din Shah's funeral
	Jalil al-Dowleh	438 (90)	1901	C
22	Baba al-Hosayni	893 (116)	1902	G, E, I
	Baba al-Hosayni	176 (50)	—	E, G, street entertainers
23	Abolqasem Nuri	461 (170)	1906	G
24	Mirza Jahangir and others	317 (23)	1895–1905	E

NOTES

- 1 The authors would like to dedicate this article to Mohammad Hasan Semsar, the last of his generation of scholars, who spent a lifetime meticulously documenting the art treasures of an ancient country and who single-handedly managed to open a window into the Golestan Palace Photograph Archives and graciously shared with an eager public what his privileged eyes saw.
- 2 Semsar and Sarayian, *Photo Archive*, 9. There have certainly been “casualties” as the country has faced two revolutions (1905–11 and 1978–79) and two changes of government (1925 and 1979) since the establishment of this collection.
- 3 A gallery-library complex within Golestan Palace that housed artwork, manuscripts, and paintings in the possession of the royal house.
- 4 For a bibliography of work published outside Iran on the topic, See Bonetti/Prandi, *Persia Qajar*, 39–48, and for an all-encompassing bibliography, see Bonetti/Mohammadi-Nameghi/Prandi, “First Hundred Years,” 126–133.
- 5 The first and last systematic inventory of the albums made available to the public was Ataba’i, *Fehrest*. The Golestan Palace archives have been examined more recently from the vantage point of power/control and gender issues in Scheiwiller, “Other Half.” For a recently published compendium of articles aimed at promoting a visual anthropology of Qajar photographs see Khosronejad, *Untold Stories*.
- 6 “Microhistory deals with levels and relations of social reality, the intersection in a given case of micro and macro”; Peltonen, “Clues,” 347–359.
- 7 The topics addressed by this article fall within the realm of qualitative sociological research and narrative analysis with forays into visual anthropology. With a focus on social history and family photography albums, the authors have benefitted from various articles and found similarities in approach and verbal expression with the following scholars: Dando, “Constructing,” 105–133, which can act as a reference article for those interested in the narrative analysis of photographs and the study of large visual databanks; and Edwards, “Sound of History,” 27–46, for visual anthropology and its methodologies, specifically the “materiality of images.” Our concern with the photograph album as an object aims at avoiding face-value interpretations (cf. Sheikh, “National Identity,” 254), while in visual anthropology, the word “object” is applied within the realm of the social use of photographs, stressing the sensorial and hence extrapolating the reading of photographs beyond the visual to invoke the relational.
- 8 Sheikh, “Album,” 9.
- 9 In 1842 the first daguerreotype camera was hand delivered to the Qajar king in the Negarestan Palace not far from the Arg in Tehran. It is not clear whether it was due to the ambivalent reception of Mohammad Shah Qajar (r. 1834–1848) or the practitioners having been overwhelmed by the technical barriers that no daguerreotypes survive in Iran today. For an image of a purported daguerreotype kept at Musée d’Orsay, Paris, see Bonetti/Prandi, *Persia Qajar*, 23. The first field cameras using wet-collodion glass plate negatives arrived at Golestan Palace by the late 1850s. For the early years of Iranian photography, see Zoka’, *Tarikh-e ‘akkasi*, and Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e ‘akkas*.

- 10 From the memoirs of his first trip to Europe; Naser al-Din Shah, *Safar-e avval*, 224–225. The authors would like to thank Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour for bringing this passage to their attention. The shah visited Europe three times: 1873, 1878, and 1889.
- 11 For a study of Naser al-Din Shah's life and time, with specific emphasis on events up to the third decade of his reign which could have affected his delayed entry into the world of photography after his coronation, refer to Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*. The name of the French instructor was Francis Carlhian (1818–1870).
- 12 For a recent reference on the topic, refer to Sattari/Salamat, "Sharaf amd Sharafāt," 74–85.
- 13 The first court photographer was Aqa Reza Eqbal al-Saltaneh, and his assistant was 'Abbas-'Ali Bayk. For more information, see Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 58.
- 14 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 47, from court chronicler Mohammad Hasan Khan E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Mer'at al-Buldan*, III, 175.
- 15 Khorasan is the northeastern province bordering present-day Russia and Afghanistan. Mazandaran is the province to the north, bordering the Caspian Sea. Karbala is the site of holy Shi'i shrines in present-day Iraq.
- 16 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 54. From this point onward, all dates in parentheses following the names of photographers refer to the presumed dates of their photographic activity.
- 17 For the lives and times of court photographers and detailed accounts of their paths of advancement, see Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*. Aqa Reza went on to have dangerous liaisons with a married princess; he died under mysterious circumstances at the age of 48; *ibid.*, 55–56.
- 18 Semsar, *Library*, 250–251. *Moraqqa'* refers to a collection of individual calligraphic works and elaborate paintings, each accompanied by illuminated drawings bound together as a book, either using two endboards in the conventional manner or in an accordion style, in which the individual pieces were hinged to one another and could be spread open in its entirety for a full view of all the pieces.
- 19 Many scholars have invoked royal patronage as the main reason for the ease with which photography took hold in Iran. It may be conjectured, however, that perhaps another reason may have been grounded in language. Iranians had equivalent words for photograph: 'aks [image], photographer: 'akkas [image maker], and photography studio: 'akkaskhaneh [house of the image maker]. "Album"—with French intonation—was the word that was eventually used for photograph albums.
- 20 Sheikh, "Rise"; and Sheikh, "National Identity."
- 21 Polak, *Safarnameh*, 60, quoted in Semsar/Sarayian, *Photo Archive*, 20. Jakob Eduard Polak (1818–1891) resided in Iran during the 1850s; see Werner, "Polak," and Gächter, *Briefe*.
- 22 For example, Edward B. Eastwick (1814–1883), a British diplomat's description of Tehran in 1864 in his *Journal*, 182: "My ride gave me no agreeable impression of a Persian city. Narrow lanes filled with holes, pits, ditches, and filth; houses of mud, many of them reduced by the late rains to ruinous heaps; close dark and dirty bazars, roofed over with sticks; mangy miserable dogs, and more miserable mendicants, were the sights that greeted me. The human mind is elastic, however, and grows reconciled even to these things." Almost 60 years later Vita Sackville-West (1892–1962) observes in *Passenger to Tehran*, 77: "Tehran itself, except for the bazaars, lacks charm; it is a squalid city of bad roads, rubbish-heaps, and pariah dogs; crazy little victorias with wretched horses; a few pretentious buildings, and mean houses on the verge of collapse."

- 23 There are three other nineteenth-century maps of Tehran, from 1826, 1858 and 1867. Already the 1858 map reveals an enlargement of the city, while the third was drawn following the expansion of the city, incorporating a larger area within the new city walls. See Ritter, *Moscheen*, 842; Semsar/Sarayian, *Archive*, 23, 27; and Zoka'/Semsar, *Tehran dar tasvir*, II, 14–15.
- 24 Sa'dvandiyan/ Ettehadiyeh, *Amar*, 28, 43–51.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 347.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 343–350.
- 27 For those interested in further study of these censuses, it is worth noting that the census provides valuable (urban) societal information broken down by household in terms of the structural habitat in their possession (main house, garden, stable, number of court yards, and baths), the nature of public infrastructure of each district, and the number of stores and religious sites. As the data is recorded with actual names and ages, when people did not bare surnames, their professions, cities of origin, or titles were used instead. This system reveals the distribution of the population within different districts based on rank as well as in retrospect the demise of many professions.
- 28 The 1869 census defines servants outside the royal quarters as those who do not have skills or knowledge and have turned to servitude, “while their number is on the rise”; Sa'dvandiyan/Ettehadiyeh, *Amar*, 346.
- 29 To name a few: Ashraf/Banuazizi, *Class Structure*; Mostofi, *Sharh*; and Varahram 1983.
- 30 Ashraf/Banuazizi, *Class Structure*.
- 31 The number of albums by decade are: 1850–1860, 4; 1860–1870, 16; 1870–1880, 7; 1880–1890, 27; 1890–1900, 28; 1900–1910, 5; unknown: 29.
- 32 The Qajar dynasty ended in 1925. The last thirty years of Qajar rule were ridden with political upheaval. Only Naser al-Din Shah's son Mozaffar al-Din Shah had the chance to leave behind a considerable number of photograph albums.
- 33 Notable among the cities depicted are Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz (and their environs), and to a certain extent Mashhad. Tabriz and Isfahan were the seats of two of Naser al-Din Shah's sons: Mozaffar al-Din Shah and Mas'ud Mirza Zell al-Soltan (1850–1918), who each had their own photographers and thus respective photograph albums. The binary social divisions as expounded in the course of this article find visual expression in all the albums of men in power (princes and governors of provincial centers and beyond) among their entourages and within their own realms.
- 34 Once a year, Naser al-Din Shah would gather his entourage and watch them prepare the ingredients and cook *ash* (soup). A large feast would follow, during which they would eat the *ash*.
- 35 The photographers of 34 albums are not identified. Their content fell within the categories designated in Table 1.
- 36 Tahmasbpour, *Shah-e 'akkas*, 150–153.
- 37 For a case at hand, see the story of the photographer Muchul Khan, a *gholambacheh*-turned-servant who acted as the king's assistant and was ironically granted the title *Sediqsaltaneh* (Faithful to the King); Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 57. For his portrait, possibly taken by Naser al-Din Shah, see Semsar/Sarayian, *Photo Archive*, 180.
- 38 Mohammadi Nameghi/Pérez González, “Women,” 64.
- 39 The eunuch was Agha Mohammad Khawjeh.

- 40 For readings of the subtitles of these photographs, refer to Semsar/Sarayan, *Photo Archive*, 353; 359; 407; 419.
- 41 For a sample of photographs, see *ibid.*, 157–178.
- 42 For a copy of this photograph (Album 289, no. 23), see *ibid.*, 144.
- 43 Naser al-Din Shah opted for direct rule for a period from c. 1865. Refer to Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 355 and chapter 9.
- 44 The exceptions are photographs taken of him on his European travels.
- 45 Albums 94, 124, 125, and 133.
- 46 For his detailed biography, see Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 121–124.
- 47 Mirza Ebrahim Khan Mostowfi al-Mamalek, son of Mirza Yusef Khan. He held key governmental positions all through his long life even after dynastic change with the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925–1941).
- 48 A complete set of the original albums can be found at the photograph archives of the Institute of Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies in Tehran. Each of the eight dark brown leather-bound albums bears the following inscription in the Latin alphabet: “Albourné Aksé Ilé Jalilé Ghadjar” [Photograph album of the grand Qajar tribe], no. 3-1-458.
- 49 Bonetti/Prandi, *Class Structure*, 61–108.
- 50 Semsar/Sarayan, *Photo Archive*, 34–51.
- 51 Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 58.
- 52 For Sardar 'Ali Khan Vali there are three shadow albums in the Golestan Palace Archive: numbers 212, 223, and 294. There is a photographic scrapbook under his name at Harvard University (Cambridge, USA). The photographs may be accessed online through Harvard Library, Visual Information Access using as title “Album photographs of Ali Khan Vali” at: <http://via.lib.harvard.edu/via/deliver/deepLinkResults?kw1=Ali%20Khan%20Vali&index1=Name&repositoryLimit=Harvard%20Fine%20Arts%20Library&digital=true> (last accessed: July 24, 2016). The work of Jalil al-Dowleh (Album 438, dated 1901) is exceptional as he has benefited from a handheld camera. See Zoka', *Tarikh-e 'akkasi*, 128–134.
- 53 Aqa Reza was also a pioneer in early ethnographic documentation, photographing professions and (poor) men and women off the streets in the royal atelier (c. 1865). For a thorough account of Aqa Reza's life and works, see Sattari, *Barrasi*.
- 54 For exact wording of the royal decree, see *ibid.*, 104. The prelude of album 291 indicates that the enclosed photographs were from the same journey, yet they were taken beyond the call of duty. Zoka's research clearly indicates that as of circa 1885, photograph expeditions had become a means of amassing a visual databank of various projects carried out around the country. The encouragement of Amin al-Soltan, the court minister and Premier, was instrumental in providing the funds. *Ibid.*, 102–105. While in retirement and traveling around the world Amin al-Soltan became an avid photographer himself.
- 55 We did not delve into macrohistorical discussions of the overall state of affairs of the country during the Qajar era. It was a matter that was perhaps taken for granted and beyond the limits of this article, though a minimum understanding would be helpful for the general reader.
- 56 Borrowing language set forth by Sekula, “Body,” 343.

DONNA STEIN

HOW A FORMER MUSEUM OF MODERN ART CURATOR ASSEMBLED AN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION FOR IRAN IN THE 1970s

The first priority of any art museum is collecting works that are particularly fine and/or exemplary in relation to the development of significant art and ideas. When I was invited to interview for a newly created curatorial advisory position at the *Daf-tar-e Makhsus Olya-Hazrat*¹ (the Secretariat of Her Imperial Majesty, the Shahbanu of Iran) in 1974, the Queen was preparing for the opening of new modern art museums in Tehran and Shiraz. We agreed my scope of work would include advising on the acquisition of prints, illustrated books, drawings, and photography,² as well as on nineteenth- and twentieth-century painting and sculpture. From September 1975 until October 1976, I also advised on the acquisition of work by contemporary Iranian artists, such as Nikzad (Nicky) Nodjoumi (b. 1942), Ghasem Hajizadeh (b. 1947), Ardeshir Mohasses (1938–2008), Faramarz Pilaram (1937–1983), Charles Hosain Zenderoudi (b. 1937), Marcos Grigorian (1925–2007), and others.³

My contract with Her Majesty's Private Secretariat, which began on February 15, 1975,⁴ stipulated that the “works on paper” recommended for purchase should encompass the history of modern art, from nineteenth-century impressionism until the present, and:

“[...] should not only complement proposed painting and sculpture acquisitions by internationally noteworthy artists, but also comprise international artists not already represented by works in other media. The collection should include the whole spectrum of technical possibilities and also represent the history of modern art in cases where it is not possible or advisable to acquire unique paintings and sculptures.”

The duties prescribed in my contract as Acquisition Advisor on Prints, Drawings and Photographs included:

“[...] plans for curatorial policy, purchasing, supervision of cataloguing, supervision of care and storage of collection, exhibitions, publications, organization of

خاتم دکتر خداستین .
 پس از دریافت احترام داراوت بی نهایت از محبت و توجه شما تشکر و سپاسگزارم که جزوه ای از عکس های
 تاریخی را که اخیراً چاپ رسانیده اید برای من رسانیده .
 برای من که در حال حاضر هیچ اثری از خدمات فرهنگی و کتابخانه‌ای که در قسمتهای مختلف برای مراکب چاپ رسانیدم
 و از مدارک تحصیلی و حتی تسمانه خود را ندارم و بطور کلی تمام حقی و مایه‌های خود را داده ام و راجه این فقط
 واقعه‌اش اخیر ایران از دست داده ام این درجوزه از عکس های تاریخی که با محبت شما چاپ
 رسانیده است و نمونه‌ای از کارهای فرهنگی این کمترین را دارا نه میدهند برای شخص من بسیار ارزنده و حفظ
 آن باعث مسرت و صفاست است . مجدداً از لطف شما تشکر کنم .
 ضمناً خدمت را بفرستم نموده و از دیدن فصل زیبای بهار را که نموده باستانی و جدیدی بخوبی غرور را به ما رسانید
 است خوش آمدگفته و از دیدنم که صلیح و صفا و دوستی برای همه مردم جهان با رضای بیادود .
 سادستی و دروغیت شما و خانواده عزیزتان را در این سال نو از خداوند بزرگتر خواهم
 خاتم دکتر خداستین . بعلت زندگی آوارگی و سرگردانی و چندان بدوشی جای حق و ثباتی
 ندارم . لذا خواهشمندم بهمان آدرس قدیم که در بوسطن است باین مکاتبه فرمائید .
 بی اداره نمون و خوشحال می‌شوم .
 64 WILBUR STREET
 WALTHAM, MA. 02154
 BADRY ATABAI
 با آرزوی سرافرازی و بهر روزی دلاوری برای سالی جهان
 و سرافرازی که خیال بافرهنگ و زیبای من ایران عزیز
 و هوشتان گرامی .
 بالذات شایسته‌ترین عذر و ادب
 ارادتمند - بدری آتابای
 دوشنبه ۱۰ ماه ۱۹۸۵
 ۱۹ اردیبهشت ۱۳۶۴

— 1: Letter from Badri Ataba'i to Donna Stein,
 dated April 18, 1985.

research and information files, development of education programs, training of staff, and initiation of international contacts for acquisitions and exhibition programs.”

At this stage of the engagement process, I could not have predicted that my acquisition strategy that guided an investment of some twenty-five million dollars in the visual arts, including photography, would today be valued at more than two billion dollars.⁵

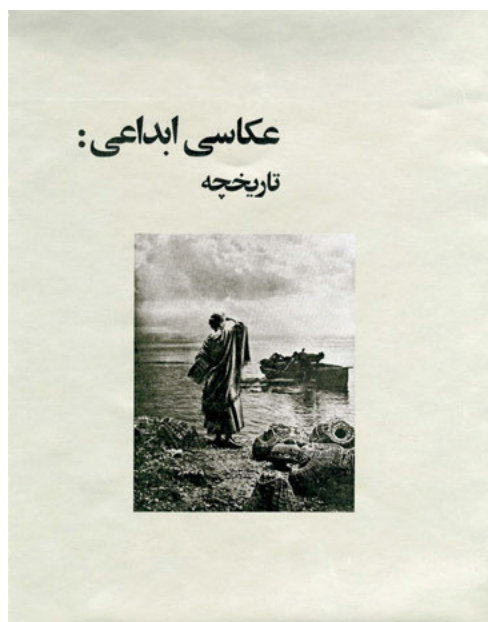
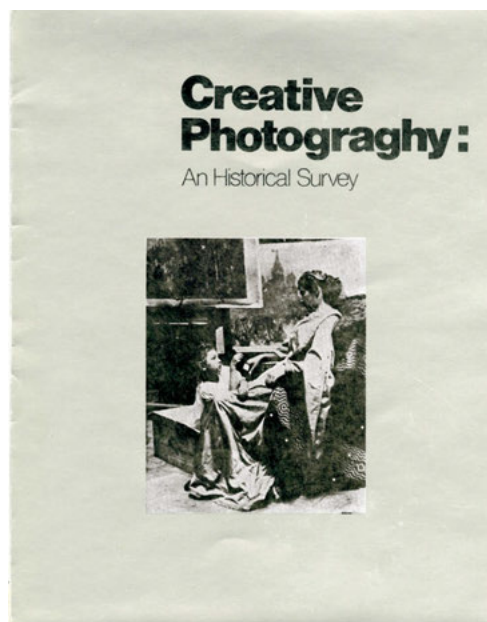
By the early 1970s, a market for art photography had begun to emerge. Although photographs would never realize the vertigo-inducing heights like those for paintings and sculpture, Iran's timing was fortuitous. Institutions and collectors of more modest means were enticed by bargain basement prices to acquire photographs that had the prestige normally associated only with first-rate painting and sculpture. The study of photographic history became integral to the history of art, thereby expanding knowledge and enlarging perspective on nineteenth- and twentieth-century visual culture. I considered collecting the earliest examples of the medium available as a priority to indicate the full spectrum of technical possibilities explored in the modern era. A historical collection with a broad international base became a measuring rod, from which to gauge the artistic achievements of today.

I would also become the first American art writer to publish information about the indigenous photography of Iran. While working in Tehran, I was fascinated to learn that Iran's passion for photography had begun in the early 1840s just after the medium's announcement in 1839, and my discovery of stunning early indigenous examples⁶ validated the pioneering collecting approach that I had previously recommended to the Queen. My overarching intention in forming a collection illustrating the history of photography for Iran validated the importance of both indigenous and international photography as an irreplaceable cultural resource with which to study the ideas and conditions of modernity. I collected a few early photographs for my personal collection and started a photographic archive of images I encountered. In 1978, when I returned to the United States, I began my research in earnest, visiting libraries, museums, and universities in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, eventually amassing an archive of more than 500 images that formed a corpus from which I wrote my earliest essays on Iranian photography.⁷ In 1985, I received a letter of gratitude from Badri Ataba'i, the former curator of the Imperial Library of the Golestan Palace in Tehran (fig. 1). She was appreciative that I had mentioned her name and the book she had published in Persian from the collections of the Golestan Palace in my articles in *History of Photography*, which were the first articles in English to be published on the subject. Ataba'i wrote, "Everything in my life is completely destroyed and annihilated. The only thing that exists on the subject is what you referred to."

In a subsequent letter, Ataba'i generously said:

"If you need any more information about photographs or details about calligraphy, margin notations, and other information from the Golestan Palace collection, I have some letters, books, [and] booklets, and with pleasure and honor, I will put the information in your hands."

The history of photography collection in Iran was meant to be a catalyst for further scholarship, providing a standard of quality against which temporary exhibitions



— 2 and 3: English and Persian covers of *Creative Photography: An Historical Survey* by Donna Stein, for one of the opening exhibitions in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, drawn from the international photography collection acquired by her.

could be projected and evaluated. It offered accepted criteria of aesthetic and technical excellence to compare with the intensity of contemporary work, helping young photographers develop their own statements, as well as promote new relationships among photographers, critics, and their growing Iranian audiences.

With a department dedicated to “works on paper,”⁸ the organization of the new collection would follow the direction of many museums throughout the world in recognizing current artistic practices. Each generation reveals its own image, and it would have been a distortion to represent any one medium in isolation. By the 1960s, artists were no longer confined by technique, and traditional boundaries between art media had eroded. Nevertheless, in the view of this curator, it was not the medium but the aesthetic intention that validated a work of art and endowed it with merit. Indeed, many contemporary painters and sculptors were using photography to document their experiences in non-pictorial art forms, such as happenings, conceptual art, earthworks, and other process-situational media.

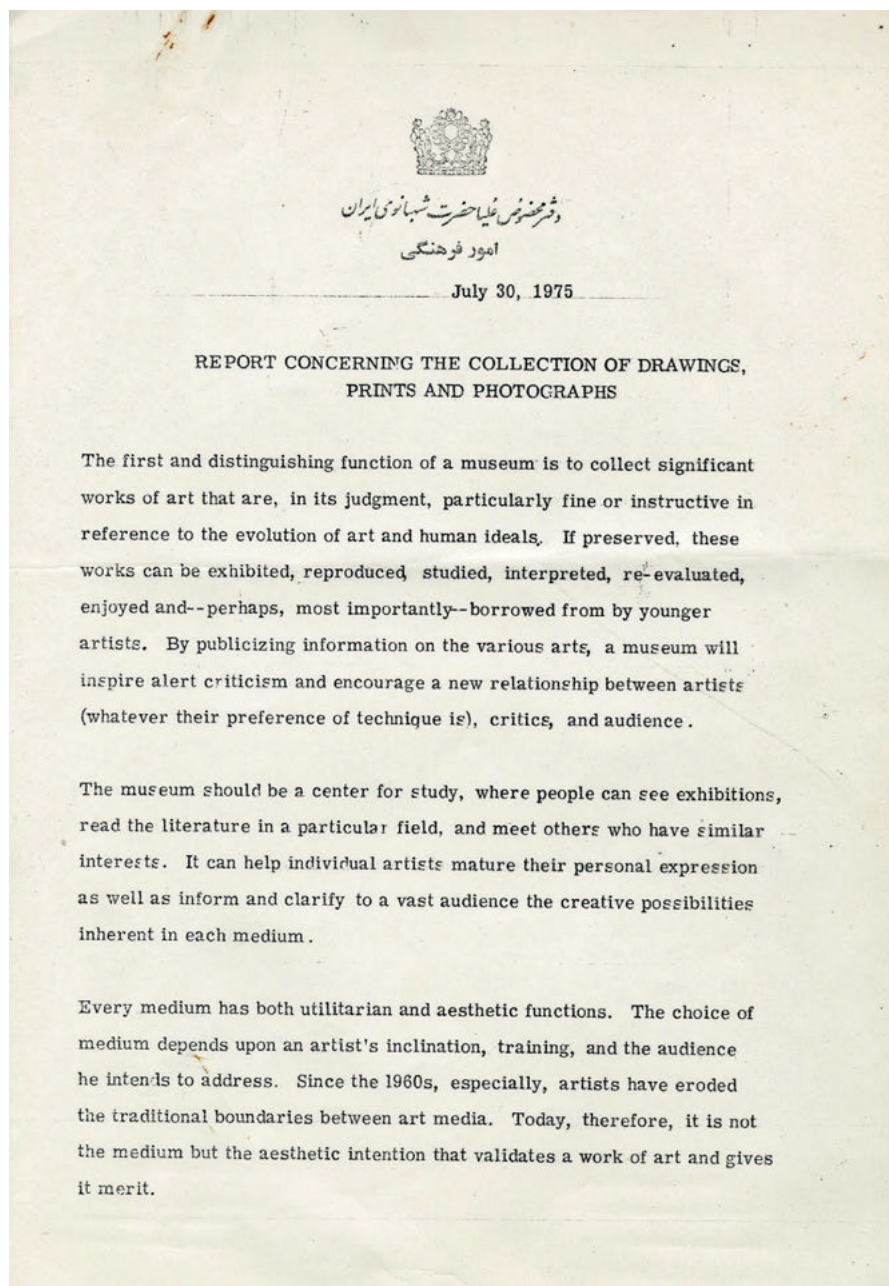
For Iran, making a serious commitment to the art of photography required imagination and the willingness to accept some intellectual risks, because in 1975,

few institutions or private collectors around the world collected and exhibited photographs. By creating a historical survey of the medium, the Secretariat, on behalf of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA), seized the opportunity to take a leading role in an under-collected and burgeoning art form. Farah Pahlavi (b. 1938) stated that similar to other developing countries, “Iran had to break loose from the tyranny of resistance to change and the inertia of underdevelopment.”⁹ The Queen believed that change required cultural transformation. As Kamran Diba (b. 1937), the Queen’s cousin and choice for founding director of TMoCA, acknowledged in his preface to *Creative Photography: An Historical Survey* (1977), the catalogue documenting the first exhibition of its kind in Iran that I curated, “This collection will establish the importance of photography as an art form and will inspire young Persian photographers to an even higher level of artistic achievement” (figs. 2, 3).¹⁰

Conceived as the first catalogue to survey the newly-established history of photography collection in Iran, in addition to the introduction, which makes a case for collecting photographs, *Creative Photography* includes a “Brief Chronological History of Photography,” a checklist of the 52 works in the exhibition, a “Glossary of Terms” and a “Selected Bibliography.” Among the other photographers reproduced in the catalogue but not discussed in this article were Hans Bellmer (1902–1975), Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971), Walker Evans (1903–1975), Lewis Hine (1874–1940), Henry Peach Robinson (1830–1901), Eva Watson-Schutze (1867–1935), and Edward Weston (1886–1958). Although I had requested that all the images in the exhibit be reproduced, in a letter from TMoCA Chief Curator David Galloway dated August 27, 1977, he explained the problems associated with the preparation of the catalogue:

“It turned out a list of photographs I was given [by Roxanne Zand, the Curator of Exhibitions, for reproductions] was a list of photographic work *not* required—as we learned too late. This threw us into a mighty crisis here, and we began ransacking the files for photographs. Many are not here; most of the rest have had paperclips put onto them, so that they are unusable for reproductions [...] we therefore got in a photographer to fill in the gaps for your catalogue, but (the final crunch) many of the works for your show are missing from the collections. Pictures have been moved from six separate storage areas, and thus far 30 prints and 20 photographs are missing. We will find them in time for the opening, but we cannot possibly organize them for the photographer in time to meet the production deadlines.”

Another advantage of photography was that photographers often printed multiple examples or editions. While some rare photographs may have been issued in relatively large numbers originally, because of drifts in style and taste, the survival of photographs has been arbitrary, and over a century prints gradually disappeared. In other



— 4: First page of July 1975 Report, written by Donna Stein.

-6-

38. Western landscape photography in the U.S. There is an important group of material on the West that relates to American 19th century painting of the same landscape and sometimes includes examples more interesting than the painting. Among individual photographers to be included are:
 - a. Carleton E. Watkins (1825 - 1915) The first to photograph in Yosemite - included in Paris exhibition of 1867.
 - b. Timothy H. O'Sullivan (1840 - 1882) Part of the Gardner team in the Civil War and later photographer in the West for the U.S. government.
 - * c. William Henry Jackson (1843 -1942) Photographer to the Hayden Survey. His documentation of the grandeur of Yosemite led to passage of legislation to create the national park system. If possible one should obtain the volume of his Yosemite photographs sent to members of Congress to promote the legislation.
 - d. C.R. Savage (active 1860's) Western landscape; California
 - e. Eadweard Muybridge (1830 - 1904) Apart from his Animal Locomotion series, Muybridge was one of the most important of the Western photographers.
39. French portrait photography. One should attempt to obtain a complete run of Galerie Contemporaine (1870's) which includes some of the finest portraits of literary and artistic figures (Baudelaire, George Sand, Rossini etc.) of the period. In addition one need examples of:
 - * a. Nadar (1820 - 1910) If possible some of his early Paris views and then important portraits.
 - b. Etienne Carjat (1828 - 1906) Portrait of Baudelaire.
40. Painter - photographers. Examples by Degas, Vuillard, Eakins, etc. Extremely hard to find but should be included.
- * 41. P.H. Emerson. (1856 - 1936) Extremely important as the link between all that went before artistically and the Stieglitz period that would follow. Emerson's platinum prints and gravures of life in East Anglia represent some of the finest photographs ever made. The exhibition should include all of his major volumes in the best possible examples per:
 - a. Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads, 1886 with forty platinotypes - the most important Emerson volume and the only one with platinum prints. Total edition of only 200.

— 5: Page 6 of outline of the history of photography addendum to July 1975 Report.

cases, very few examples were issued from the beginning. Nevertheless, in 1975 it was still possible to acquire a fine, representative collection covering the history of modern art, and including numerous masterpieces, at modest prices.¹¹

Quality and value were standard criteria for selection.¹² Especially with older works, exceptional examples could not be purchased methodically but were acquired as they became available. It was essential to know the marketplace in order to locate high quality items for the lowest possible cost, since examples from the same negative could sell for two different prices. Also, some negatives were printed sporadically over a period of years. Because artists do not work in terms of single images, it was practical to collect in depth when possible in order to illuminate an artist's vocabulary and concerns. While some artists did not justify comprehensive treatment, their work helped to show the full spectrum of art of their time, presenting a rich tapestry of ideas, theories, and methods.

A twenty-three-page "Report Concerning the Collection of Drawings, Prints and Photographs" that I wrote and submitted to the Head of the Secretariat, Karim Pasha Bahadori,¹³ in July 1975 provided guidelines for the acquisition program (fig. 4). The report recommended photographers from the beginning of the medium in the 1830s through contemporary practitioners, and identified the photographers whose work had already been purchased for the Iranian collection in June 1975 when I was working for the Secretariat but still living in New York City.¹⁴ The commentary concentrated on paper prints and discussed the most important photographers since William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) and reviewed their contributions and stylistic orientations (fig. 5).

By January 1977, in the Iranian international collection there were 80 photographs from the United States, England, Scotland, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. The collection illustrated the full range of paper techniques as experimentations and new methods were conceived and practiced over more than a century: calotypes, albumen prints, platinum prints, collodion prints, photogravures, composite photographs, rayographs or photograms, photomontages, color charcoal prints, and silver gelatin prints. The prints convey the essential nature of photography and make known the individuals who had spent their life work exploring the formal and aesthetic considerations intrinsic to this art. The earliest work by William Henry Fox Talbot, *Single Fern* (1836–1837), was an exquisite photogenic drawing, the name given by the photographer in 1835 to the process he discovered to draw with light, producing silhouettes of objects laid on sensitized paper.

I assumed Middle Eastern subjects would be of particular interest in Iran and looked for excellent photographic examples. The "Grand Tour," traveling for extended periods to learn about other cultures, was considered a necessary rite of passage for affluent Europeans after their formal education. Their experiences and early photographic documentation of the lives and wonders they saw abroad impacted visual

representation in all media. The most significant example in the collection was an early calotype by the Scottish photographers David Octavius Hill (1802–1870) and Robert Adamson (1821–1848). Between 1843 and 1847, the Hill and Adamson partnership was the first to jointly produce more than 1,000 pictures, one of which was *Edward W. Lane (1801–1876) as a Persian* (fig. 6).

An eminent British Orientalist, translator, and lexicographer, Lane was known for his version of *One Thousand and One Nights*. On closer inspection, he appears to be asleep on a step in full costume, lying on his side and resting on his right arm. The calotype process required long exposures and was limited to outdoor photography, including this seemingly interior shot. The platinum print of Frederick Evans (1852–1943), *Portrait of F. Holland Day in Arab (Algerian) Costume* (c. 1901) is another example. Day, the American Pictorialist photographer and publisher, was the first to advocate in the United States that photography should be considered an art.¹⁵ Maxime Du Camp photographed *Baalbeck, Syria, Interior of the Enclosure of the Temples of the Sun and Jupiter* between 1849 and 1851.¹⁶ This calotype was printed and published by Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard (1802–1872). The English photographer James Robertson

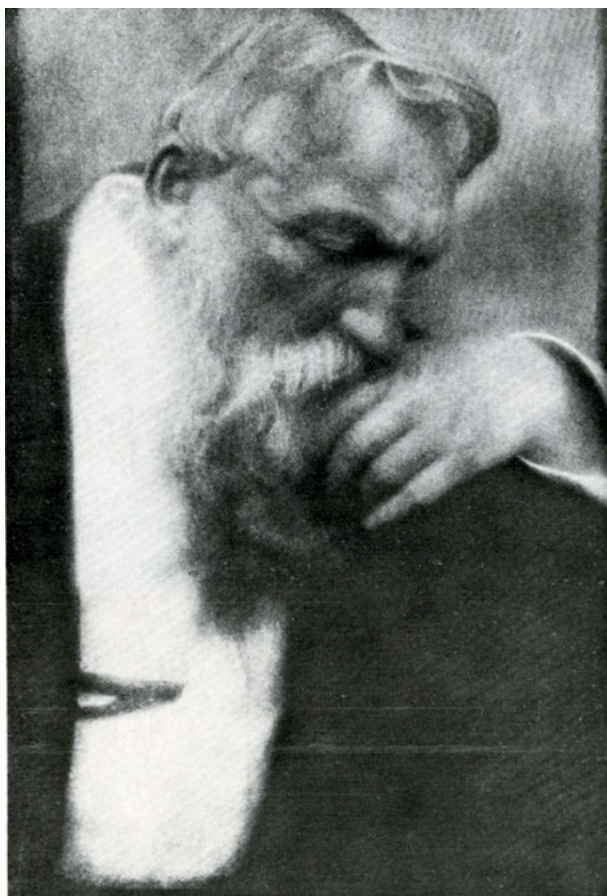


— 6: David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, *Edward W. Lane (1801–1876) as a Persian*, 1843–1847, calotype, 14.7 × 20.7 cm (5 3/4 × 4 1/4 inches), Collection of TMOCA.



— 7: James Robertson, *Imperial Door of the Old Seraglio, Constantinople*, c. 1850–1854, calotype, 30.9 × 25.8 cm (12 × 10 1/8 inches), Collection of TMOCA.

(1813–1888), trained as an engraver of coins and gems, documented *The Imperial Door of the Old Seraglio in Constantinople* (c. 1850–1854) in a beautiful calotype (fig. 7). Two albumen prints by Félix Bonfils (1831–1885) show a general exterior view and the interior of the *Grand Mosque of Omar, Damascus* (c. 1860).



— 8: Edward Steichen, Auguste Rodin, from *Camera Work* (Volume 34), 1907, photogravure, 16.5 x 24.2 cm (6 ½ x 9 ½ inches), Collection of TMOCA.

Photographic portraits of artists known in other media were an important grouping in the collection, because they made visible to contemporary artists in Iran other masters who had come before them. Among the earliest was Nadar's distinguished profile portrait of the English sculptor, *John Gibson R.A.* (1790–1865) from c. 1860, the albumen print cut into an oval, which was the fashion of the time. Edward Steichen's *Auguste Rodin*,¹⁷ an original photogravure dating from 1907, depicts one of the most renowned sculptors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (fig. 8).

This romantic vision of Rodin, deep in thought stroking his long white beard, was featured in *Camera Work* (Volume 34), the most important American publication con-



— 9: Alfred Stieglitz, *Portrait of John Marin, Hand-Tinting His Issue of "291"* (Number 4, 4 June 1915), platinum print, 11 × 9 cm (4 ¼ × 3 ½ inches), Collection of TMOCA.

cerned with early modern art and photography.¹⁸ A beautiful platinum print, *Portrait of John Marin*,¹⁹ *Hand-tinting his Issue of "291"* (Number 4 June, 1915), by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), captures the American modernist painter at work (fig. 9).²⁰ Two portraits of the French painter Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947)²¹ in his studio, a color charcoal print by Gisèle Freund (1908–2000) and the other by Rogi André (1905–1970), also entered the collection.

Photographs by prominent painters were also acquired, because artists used camera vision and images as replacements for sketching from nature for authentic detail. Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), the uncompromising American realist painter, watercolorist, and engraver, was also a dedicated and talented photographer. He

introduced the camera into the American art studio, and by 1880 had already incorporated photography into his working life, using it as a teaching device comparable to anatomical drawing. Two photographs by Eakins, *Boy in Motion* (c. 1885) and *Walt Whitman in the Second Floor Bedroom of his House at 328 Mickle Street, Camden, New Jersey* (1892), the year the poet died, are significant examples of this genre. Eakins met and painted Whitman in 1887 and an immediate and meaningful friendship was kindled because of their similar ideas about art and intent to celebrate the United States. The Czech *fin de siècle* illustrator and poster designer Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) acquired a camera in the early 1890s and used it extensively. An undated *Study for a Painting of the artist's wife and child* and *Model for Poster, Paris* (the cover for *L'Index*, 1905), c. 1901, are both fine examples of his gold chloride toned images on printing-out paper.

Among many wonderful portraits in the collection is Lewis Carroll's collodion print from 1859 of *The Liddell Family* (*Alice, Louisa, Harry and Edith*), which includes the legendary model for his famous tale *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879), whose portrayals are considered among the finest in the early history of photography, took up the medium when her daughter gave her a camera at the age of 48 in 1863. Over the course of the next 12 years, she became an expert in the wet collodion process. In 1868, Cameron created several images of *Captain Tristram Speedy, Guardian of the young Ethiopian prince Alámayou*, at her studio on the Isle of Wight. Known for her pioneering romantic portraits, she used selective focus to create the spiritual effects she sought. Here the profile of the handsome soldier in Ethiopian regalia is contrasted with the young prince, who, following the deaths of his parents, stares sadly into the camera. Two impressive Native American representations are in the collection. Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), who studied drawing and painting, became obsessed with photography, promoting it as a career for women. From her studio window she saw the cast of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show parading down Fifth Avenue in New York City and decided to photograph the performers. Her dignified portrayal of *Joe Blackfox with Face Paint* (c. 1898), a member of the Sioux Indian tribe, is shown in a half-length pose with his body angled toward the right, and his head turned toward the camera with the hint of a smile (fig. 10). The rich platinum print captures the details of his costume. *Geronimo* (1905) by American ethnologist and photographer of the American West and Native American peoples Edward S. Curtis (1865–1952) depicts the famous Apache leader in ceremonial dress. This exquisite platinum print presents a powerful frontal portrait of an old, forlorn man whose legend as a fierce warrior has been repeatedly referenced in popular culture. Two straightforward and objective portraits by the German photographer August Sander (1876–1964) of a *Jockey* (1928) and a *Farm Couple* (1930) were part of his vast photographic project, *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (*People of the 20th Century*), subtly interpreting his subjects and their social roles. There is also a compelling portrait of the famous actress *Marlene Dietrich* taken by Cecil Beaton (1904–1980) in 1935.



— 10: Gertrude Käsebier, Joe Blackfox with Face Paint, c. 1898, platinum print, 20.4 × 13.4 cm (8 × 5 ¼ inches), Collection of TMOCA.

The urban environment is documented in many Iranian collection photographs. Another Blanquart-Evrard calotype print of Charles Marville's *View taken from Notre Dame Bridge* (1852) was plate 26 in the album *Paris Photographique*. Marville (1813–1879) excelled as an architectural photographer and was named the official photographer of Paris, where he documented the changes in the ancient Parisian quarters during Baron Haussmann's modernization of the city (1853–1870). Arnold Genthe's most cel-

ibrated and frequently reproduced photograph was taken on Sacramento Street, looking toward the Bay on April 18, 1906, the day after the San Francisco Earthquake. Genthe (1869–1942), who lost everything in his studio, described the results of the earthquake, the beginning of the fire, and the attitude of the people: “On the right is a house, the front of which had collapsed into the street. The occupants are sitting on chairs calmly watching the approach of the fire. Groups of people are standing in the street, motionless, gazing at the clouds of smoke. When the fire crept up close, they



— 11: Jean-Eugène-August Atget, 51, Rue de Montmouracy, c. 1910–1920, printing-out paper, gold chloride toned, 16.5 × 21.6 cm (6 ½ × 8 ½ inches), Collection of TMOCA.

would just move a block. The shock of the disaster had completely numbed our sensibilities.”²² The eye of Eugène Atget (1856–1927), whose subjects were parks, statues, old stairways, doorways, buildings, carnivals, and people of the streets in Paris and its environs, can be seen in 51, *Rue de Montmouracy* (fig. 11) and *Quai des Grandes Augustines*, both from 1910–1920. He recorded, and in part preserved, the Paris of an earlier age, illustrating the vernacular and official architecture of the old city. But his sense of

history was not restricted to the past. He was alert to contemporary everyday life. Atget explored the relativity of vision, illustrating that truth depends always on the moment, on an angle of sight. His photographs are repositories of facts and personal visions, essential characteristics that distinguish all art from non-art. He is widely considered the most important modern artist of his medium—the Picasso of photography.²³

The landscape tradition in painting was a natural subject for photographers, particularly as early techniques required long exposures. Carleton Watkins (1829–1916), who took his first photographs in Yosemite Valley in 1861 and was the first to “systematically present the landscape as wilderness before the arrival of man,”²⁴ is prominently represented in the Iranian collection. His mammoth albumen contact print of *Vernal Falls, Yosemite, California* (1867) shows the rugged beauty and sublime topography of Yosemite’s vast wilderness. The grandeur of the dramatic waterfalls, massive rock faces, and majestic trees led President Lincoln (term of office 1861–1865) to declare the valley inviolate and initiate the nation’s National Park System. Experienced wilderness photographer, William Henry Jackson (1843–1942), was hired by F. V. Hayden (1829–1887) as the official photographer of the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories from 1870–1879. He made the first recorded ascent of *Mount of the Holy Cross, Colorado* in August 1873 (fig. 12). The high mountain peak (14,011 ft.) in the Rocky Mountains of North America is printed to capture the rumored cross-shaped snowfield on the northeast face of the summit. The mammoth albumen print is masked to highlight this distinctive feature. Some sites are visible in two images, taken nearly a century apart. For example, one is an image by Timothy O’Sullivan (1840–1882) of the iconic *Ancient Ruins in the Canyon de Chelly, National Monument Arizona* (1873) and the other *The Canyon de Chelly, National Monument, Arizona* (1942) by Californian Ansel Adams (1902–1984), who helped to define twentieth-century landscape photography with his elegant and detailed black-and-white portraits of the American West.

The Iranian international photography collection was meant to contextualize works in other media—paintings, sculptures, drawings, and graphics. A gelatin silver print by Man Ray (1890–1976) of *Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas at 27 Rue de Fleurus, Paris* was an ideal acquisition, because it depicts two of the earliest and most important collectors of avant-garde art (fig. 13). Photographed in 1922, the year after Man Ray arrived in Paris, the image confirms that the versatile interdisciplinary American artist had already been welcomed into the inner circle of the Parisian art world. Famed for their salons, which attracted the cultural elite of the time,²⁵ Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), one of the foremost American writers, poets, and critics in Paris between the world wars, and her life partner are seated in their drawing room, surrounded by their collection of cubist and other modernist works. The view of the studio is fascinating because of the historically significant artworks on the wall, many of which

are identifiable by Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and Georges Braque (1882–1963). The photographer subtly comments on the relationship through the positioning of the women and the angle of the camera. Stein is seated parallel to the picture plane in a large commodious armchair. On the other side of the fireplace mantle, Toklas is primly posed in a small side chair that is angled and slightly back in the picture plane, with her hands in her lap. A coffee cup and wine glass are placed on the table in front of Stein. Both women stare directly at the camera.

Among the more avant-garde techniques represented in the collection was a rayograph, a process developed by Man Ray in Paris about 1921 and similar to the



— 12: William Henry Jackson, Mount of the Holy Cross, Colorado, August 1873, albumen print, 35 x 54 cm (13 ¾ x 21 ¼ inches), Collection of TMOCA.



— 13: Man Ray, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas at 27 Rue de Fleurus, Paris, 1922, gelatin silver print, 16.5 × 22.9 cm (6 ½ × 9 inches), Collection of TMOCA.

photogram developed simultaneously in Berlin by László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946). *Egg-beater and Abstracted Segment of Living Space* (1947) is unique, made without using a camera or lens. Flat or three-dimensional opaque or translucent objects were placed directly on sensitized paper and illuminated from above, creating patterns and silhouettes. The blackest areas were exposed for the longest time. In *Grecian Head* (c. 1920s), Francis Brugière (1880–1945) fashioned his own cut paper and “light abstractions,” suggesting surreal multiple exposures that were as unique as the photographs of Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy. In *Metamorphosis* (1936), Herbert Bayer (1900–1985) created a photomontage as a landscape for the mind, using elemental geometric forms to fashion a dynamic abstract scene in front of a verdant, cloudy horizon.

Not everything I selected for Iran was ultimately purchased. Among the recommended examples that were rejected was *Patriotic Boy with Straw Hat, Buttons and Flag, Waiting to March in a Pro-War Parade* (1967) by Diane Arbus (1923–1971). *Patriotic Boy* is one of her most famous images and the “lot” included a handwritten letter by Jim Dine, who previously owned the photograph, describing its provenance. I had met Arbus when I was Assistant Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books at The Museum of

Modern Art in the 1960s and admired her oeuvre, which, with rare exceptions, focused on people. Her portraits were mysterious and psychological, and captured private realities. Unfortunately, the Acquisition Committee, which had the final say on what was purchased, was not fully familiar with the history of photography and thus not inclined to acquire contemporary photographers for fear that they might not meet the test of time. On reflection, perhaps Arbus's image of a flag waver was too "All-American" for their tastes or maybe they interpreted the image as critical of the United States?²⁶ Clearly, price was no object as this unique version of *Patriotic Boy* was available for \$1,800 at the time.

Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, occasional exhibitions²⁷ have focused on the international photography holdings despite an anti-American political climate. In the ensuing 36 years, photography has had a serious and widespread presence in Iran. While the work in the 1980s was largely photojournalistic and propagandistic, the establishment of photography as a discipline in the universities during the early- to mid-1980s, the continuous presence of photography exhibitions and the emergence of photography books and magazines reflect the importance of the medium and the change that occurred over time.

Conditions of contemporary Iranian society have inspired artists to find inventive and alternate ways of expressing themselves. By the 1990s, contemporary Iranian fine art photography, far more than painting or sculpture, began to address sensitive issues, such as identity, gender, history, and the role of language in constructing truths and realities. Through metaphor and allegory, these photographers have mediated in profound ways the issues of our time and express the complexity of Iranian culture today through a labyrinthine system of signs and symbols that bridge a civilization with ancient pre-Islamic roots and ambivalent Arab-Islamic relationships.

Present-day Iran is not isolated from the world. It has a tremendously skillful, talented, and Internet-savvy population that has given visibility a whole new meaning, questioning the role and power of photography in the era of social media:

"[While] the global culture of the internet is posing challenges to the political and clerical elite [...], [t]he eyes of Iran are on North America, Europe, and Asia—and the majority of those eyes belong to young Iranians, who have no memory of life before the revolution."²⁸

Hopefully young, forward-looking Iranians will continue to use the photographs I collected to question cultural and political values in order to express themselves beyond any limitation or border, east or west.

NOTES

- 1 As McFadden, "Museum," 9, stated: "The Empress Farah fostered much of the art activity in Iran from the late '60s onward. She established an annual international arts festival in Shiraz and founded numerous museums and cultural centers managed by the Shahbanou Farah Foundation." Her dream has gone beyond her expectations and is a significant legacy to her country.
- 2 While working at the Museum of Modern Art, I attended two university classes on the history of photography presented by MoMA Photography Department Director John Szarkowski (1925–2007) and Curator Peter Bunnell (b. 1937), which deepened my interest in the medium.
- 3 Because I was a foreigner and worked in the utmost secrecy, my role in the formation of the collections was never made clear and was basically suppressed by the authorities. I was rarely interviewed for articles, and consequently, there is a lot of misinformation about who did what and when.
- 4 All cited and quoted contracts, letters and documents are in the personal archive of the author. During the first four months in New York City, I was also asked "to select and identify exemplary works of high international standard in all media, research museums and libraries in New York, provide budgetary estimate for department, acquire art books for libraries in Iran, and make contact with appropriate galleries and private dealers in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Milan and Tokyo, etc)."
- 5 Setrakian, "Inside," said: "Dozens of works by the likes of Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock—together valued at roughly \$3 billion—are locked in a basement in Tehran." Pomeroy/Mostafavi, "Tehran Museum," state that, "[Ehsan] Aghaie says the collection has been valued at more than \$2.5 billion." Tait, "Art No One Sees," claims: "Estimates of their combined current value range from 1 billion pounds to 2.5 billion pounds."
- 6 In my first year-end report dated March 15, 1976, I recommended an exhibition for the Negarestan Museum based on my research entitled "Early Photography in Iran." Somewhat earlier, in a letter to architect Terry Williams dated February 26, 1976, I wrote: "I am particularly interested in a project I am doing for the Negarestan Museum—an exhibition on 'Early Photography in Iran.' I have begun to find all sorts of fabulous photographs, which have never been published and think this will be important for Iran. I'm still not sure when it will take place."
- 7 See Stein, "Early Photography," and in Persian, *Saraghaz*; and Stein, "Recent Research;" "Three Photographic Traditions;" "Photographic Source."
- 8 In a letter to Fereshteh Daftari, art consultant and my colleague in the Queen's Secretariat, dated November 5, 1974, before I officially interviewed for the job, I wrote: "Are there any art photographers in Iran? One idea for the print department might be to include the history of photography. The Metropolitan Museum collection is organized that way and so are other museums. The cost of photographs are not that much and it is still possible to acquire historical prints since they were also not done as unique examples."
- 9 Stein, "Love," 76.

- 10 Stein, *Creative Photography*, 4.
- 11 In a letter to Fereshteh Daftari dated March 26, 1975, I wrote: "All the dealers I have spoken with have been concerned about the time period between selection and decision, payment procedures and methods of shipping... Prompt payment is desirable for dealers will be more willing to offer choice objects and save works, which they think may interest us. Also, holding in reserve selected material (especially works under \$500, e.g., prints and photographs) is not exactly fair to a businessperson, especially if the material is sent to Iran, out-of-stock for several months, and then possibly returned. As far as shipping is concerned, works of art should be sent via normal carriers, such as registered air mail packages (which are restricted depending on size) or air freight or else via diplomatic pouch, in which case art works could be delivered or mailed to the Iranian Embassy in Washington or given over to an authorized courier in New York City. A diplomatic pouch is probably the most trusted means of transportation."
- 12 Quality is based on the originality, intelligence, and inspiration of an artist; composition resolution and perfection; iconographic intent; and technical skill. Value is determined by scarcity and condition.
- 13 Bahadori was not educated in art history, and I considered it my first responsibility to teach him and awaken his passion for what I was trying to achieve in order to have success in forming the international collection. In a summary report I submitted on March 15, 1976, under the category "Research and report on international works offered for sale," I indicated that I had written more than 85 reports since September 1975.
- 14 An official letter from the Queen's Secretariat dated March 5, 1975, making the point that they did not want to be perceived as mindless Middle Eastern buyers with petro dollars, outlines the purchasing procedures as follow: "You will select the prints, drawings and photographs; you will contact the gallery or whatever source, and inform them about your interest in purchasing the selected works for a museum in Iran; you should ask them to send an official letter to my attention at the office. In the letter the following information should be stated: name of the source; complete information on the selected works; market or usual price; special price for our museum (this does not mean that the gallery can offer a high price as the market price, so that the special price would actually equal the usual price, since prices can be checked); for payment the office will contact the firm directly."
- 15 These two examples are not very different from the approach that contemporary Iranian photographer Shadi Ghadirian (b. 1974) took when she reproduced Qajar-era photographs, adding subtle details that jarringly referenced contemporary life, including a Pepsi can or a boom box.
- 16 Subsequently, this image was published as Plate 119 in Du Camp, *Egypt*.
- 17 Rodin's drypoint of three views of *Henry Becque* (1883–87), based on a terracotta bust, was in the TMOCA collection.
- 18 I also purchased a complete set of the publication (50 numbers) for Iran that had belonged to Beaumont Newhall, a distinguished American curator, art historian, writer, and photographer.
- 19 The TMOCA collection includes Marin's *Brooklyn Bridge Swaying* No. 6, an etching from 1913.

- 20 291 was an arts and literary magazine that published original artwork, essays, poems, and commentaries and was issued in March 1915 through 1916. Described as a mix of *Camera Work* and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Les Soirées de Paris*, it took its name from the address of Stieglitz's famous gallery on Fifth Avenue in New York City and was the most advanced periodical of its time.
- 21 Among Bonnard's original prints in the TMOCA collection were the early lithographs *Scene de Famille* and *Femme au Parapluie* from *Album de la Revue Blanche*.
- 22 Patterson, *Gentle*, 7.
- 23 Davis, *Picasso*, 88.
- 24 Witkin/London, *Guide*, 265.
- 25 Most recently further mythologized in Woody Allen's film *Midnight in Paris* (2011).
- 26 Photography dealer Lee Witkin, owner of the Witkin Gallery Inc., who had the Arbus for sale, sent me a copy of the letter he received from the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art dated June 6, 1983, apparently sent to the various dealers that had sold books and photographs to Iran: "Dear Sir, With pleasure we would like to inform you that by the Islamic Revolution of Iran in Feb. 1978 [sic 1979], with the leadership of Imam Khomeini, the management of all cultural and arts centers has been changed in all Iran, also the management of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is Mr. Hosain Kashian. Could you please send your publications and letters in the name Mr. H. Kashian by the following address: Tehran, Iran, Kargar Ave., Laleh Park, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art." H. Kashian, the director of the museum, signed the letter. A set of photographic postcards and miscellaneous publications accompanied the letter.
- 27 For example, *Inner Eye*, 2008; *World Photography*, 2010.
- 28 Goldbaum, *Persian Visions*.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Esra Akcan is an associate professor in the Department of Architecture at Cornell University. She completed her architecture degree at the Middle East Technical University in Turkey, and her PhD and postdoctoral degrees at Columbia University in New York. She has taught history-theory classes and architectural design studios at the University of Illinois Chicago, Humboldt University in Berlin, Columbia University, The New School, and Pratt Institute in New York, and METU in Ankara. Akcan is the author of *Architecture in Translation* (2012); *Turkey: Modern Architectures in History* (2012, with S. Bozdoğan); *Çeviride Modern Olan* (2009); and *(Land)Fill Istanbul: Twelve Scenarios for a Global City* (2004). She guest edited an issue on globalization for *Domus M*, an issue on German-Turkish intertwined histories for *Centropa*, and co-edited one on writing Asian modernity for *Nakhara*. She has authored over a hundred articles in scholarly books and professional journals in multiple languages on contemporary theory (critical and postcolonial theory and globalization), modern and contemporary architecture in West Asia, Ottoman architectural photography, established Euro-American architects' engagement with the Gulf States, and the Middle Eastern diaspora in Europe.

Martina Baleva is an art historian and assistant professor of Cultural Topographies of Eastern Europe in the Cultural Topographies Competence Centre at the University of Basel. Her PhD (2010) in Art History dealt with "The Invention of the Nation on the Balkans in the Art of 19th Century" and was awarded the Fritz and Helga Exner Foundation through the South-East Europe Association, Munich. She served as a visiting fellow at the Imre Kertész College "Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century: Comparative Historical Experience" in Jena, and as a research assistant at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Baleva works on visual historiography, the history of photography, and the politics of memory, with a special emphasis on Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Ottoman and Post-Ottoman world. She acted as researcher in numerous projects, curated exhibitions, and organized various conferences on visual history and visual studies, among them "From Basel to Bursa and back:

The Story of an Photo Album by Sébah & Joaillier” (2017); “Schweizer Nachwuchsforum Bildforschung östliches Europa” (2015–2016); “Junges Forum für Bildwissenschaften” (2010–2011); “Batak as a Bulgarian Lieu de mémoire” (2007).

Edhem Eldem is a professor at the Department of History of Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, and has taught as visiting professor at the University of California Berkeley, Harvard University, Columbia University, at EHESS, EPHE, and ENS in Paris, in addition to being a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. He has worked on Levant trade, Ottoman funerary epigraphy, the socio-economic development of Istanbul, the Ottoman Bank, archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, and late Ottoman first-person narratives and biographies, most notably of Osman Hamdi Bey. He has curated a number of exhibitions on historical subjects and themes. Among his publications are *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (1999); *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (with D. Goffman and B. Masters, 1999); *A History of the Ottoman Bank* (1999); *Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations* (2004); *Death in Istanbul: Death and its Rituals in Ottoman-Islamic Culture* (2005); *Consuming the Orient* (2007); *L'épigraphie ottomane musulmane XVI^e-XX^e siècles: Contribution à une histoire de la culture ottomane* (with N. Vatin 2007); *Un Ottoman en Orient: Osman Hamdi Bey en Irak, 1869-1871* (2010); *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753-1914* (with Z. Bahrani and Z. Çelik, 2011); *Nazlı's Guestbook, Osman Hamdi Bey's Circle* (2014); *Mendel-Sébah: Documenting the Imperial Museum* (2014); *Camera Ottomana: Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire, 1840-1914* (with Z. Çelik, 2015).

Elahe Helbig graduated from the University of Bonn in 2008. Her field of study was Media Studies with a focus on aesthetic communication, along with Art History and Iranian Studies. She was a curator and an associate researcher for various exhibition projects in museums and exhibition halls in Germany between 2006 and 2012, e.g. at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn and at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum – Kulturen der Welt in Köln. She participated in and contributed to several exhibition catalogues and art magazines that focused on Iranian contemporary art and organized the international conference *Iranian Contemporary Art—Searching for Identity?* held at the University of Bonn in 2012. For her work on nineteenth-century Iranian photography Helbig had been awarded several fellowships. She is currently working as an academic assistant at the University of Geneva.

Khadijeh Mohammadi Nameghi is a researcher in the history of Iranian photography with a particular focus on photography of women and women photographers. In 2007, she earned an MA in photography at the Faculty of Visual Art, Tehran

University of Art, with the thesis “Representation of Women in Late Nineteenth-Century Photographs in Iran.” She is currently teaching photography and history of photography at the University of Tehran. She has published several articles, such as “From Sitters to Photographers: Women in Iranian Photography from the Qajar Era through the 1930s,” (with C. Pérez González), in *History of Photography*, special issue on Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Photography in Iran, 37 (2013).

Alireza Nabipour is an active photographer and has been teaching photography and the history of photography at Jihad-e-Daneshgahi University since 2010 and at the Art and Architecture University of Kashan since 2011. He received an MA in photography from the University of Tehran in 2012. His thesis was on the photographic representations of the Qajar social strata through portraiture. Nabipour has had several solo shows of his photography and has published several articles, such as “The Disfigured and the Abnormal Captured by the Lens of Qajar Era Photographers” (2014).

Carmen Pérez González holds an MA in astrophysics (University of Barcelona), an ABD in fine arts (photography, University of Barcelona), and a doctorate in art history (Leiden University), where she graduated with a dissertation which was awarded the ICAS Best PhD Dissertation Prize in Humanities in 2011 (AAS/ICAS Honolulu, Hawaii). A revised and augmented version of her dissertation was published as *Local Portraiture: Through the Lens of the 19th Century Iranian Photographers* (2012). She has worked as a project manager and curator at the Science Museum in Barcelona, the Department of Culture of the Embassy of Spain in Prague, and as a postdoctoral curatorial research fellow at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne (2009–2014) where she wrote the exhibition catalogue *From Istanbul to Yokohama: The Camera Meets Asia, 1839–1900* (2014). She has co-edited two special issues on nineteenth-century photography: “The First Hundred Years of Iranian Photography,” *History of Photography*, Volume 37, issue 1; and “175 Years of Photography in Spain,” *PhotoResearcher*, No 21. She is currently working as a postdoctoral research associate at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Science and Technology Studies of Bergische Universität Wuppertal. Her current research project focuses on the introduction of scientific photography in Iran, and she teaches on the history of scientific photography.

Markus Ritter is full professor for History of Islamic Art at the Department of Art History, University of Vienna. He studied at the University of Bamberg (PhD 2003), the American University in Cairo, and the University of Tehran, with briefer stays at Ankara and Tunis. He taught History of Islamic Art at different universities, was a researcher at the Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences, and assistant professor at the University of Zurich. His research interests include Persian art and architecture from the medieval to the pre-modern periods, Arab mosque and

palace architecture, transfer and adaptation processes, and the changing context of art. He is the author of *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran 1785–1848: Architektur zwischen Rückgriff und Neuerung* (2006), *The Golden Qur'an From the Age of the Seljuks and Atabegs* (with N. Ben Azzouna, 2015), *Der umayyadische Palast des 8. Jahrhunderts in Hırvat al-Minya am See von Tiberias* (2017), and several co-edited volumes including *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen* (with R. Kauz and B. Hoffmann, 2008). His book on early Qajar architecture in 18th–19th-century Iran won both the European Award of Iranian Studies and the Iranian Farabi Award.

Mohammad Sattari holds a BA, MA, and PhD in the history of photography. He has been an official member of the scientific board and Associate Professor of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Campus of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran since 1989. He is the executive director of photography of the Faculty of Fine Arts for BA and MA majors. He was executive director, chief editor, and member of the editorial board of 'Aks (Photograph) magazine from 1989–1998 and the official representative of Iran to the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP) from 1994–98. He is a founding member of the Iranian Association of Photographers.

Staci G. Scheiwiller is an associate professor of Modern Art History at California State University, Stanislaus. She received her PhD in History of Art from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 2009. Her field is modern and contemporary art with an emphasis in Iranian art and photography and a minor field in Islamic art. She also specializes in theories of postcolonialism and gender. Currently, Scheiwiller is focused on issues of modernity and modernism in Iran during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among several publications, her most recent ones include an edited volume entitled *Performing the Iranian State: Visual Culture and Representations of Iranian Identity* (2013) and *Liminalities of Gender and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Iranian Photography* (2017).

Wendy M. K. Shaw is professor of the Art History of Islamic Cultures at the Free University of Berlin. She is the author of *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2003) and *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (2012). Her work explores the intersection between modernity, colonialism, postcoloniality, philosophy and art in the Islamic world through museums, art historiography, archaeology, religion, film, photography and contemporary artistic production. It features a regional emphasis on the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey within comparative perspectives with other regions of the global south and dominant Islamic legacies.

Stephen Sheehi (PhD, Michigan) is the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Professor of Middle East Studies at the College of William and Mary. He is the author of *Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign against Muslims* (2011) and *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (2004). His *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography 1860–1910* (2016) is a critical examination into the history of indigenous photography, particularly studio portraiture, in the Ottoman Arab world. Along with Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar, he is co-author of *Camera Palaestina: Photographic Albums of Wasif Jawhariyyeh* (forthcoming). Among elsewhere, he has published articles on Arab intellectual, literary, cultural and art history, literature in *Third Text*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Discourse*, *Critique*, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, and *Journal of Comparative South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Studies*.

Reza Sheikh is an independent scholar in the field of Iranian history of photography. He was also a founding member of ‘Akskhaneh-ye Shahr (City Photography Museum) in Tehran and lectures on the history of photography and photocriticism at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran.

Donna Stein, former deputy director of the Wende Museum of the Cold War in Culver City, is also a curator and essayist. She has worked as an art historian and curator for more than 40 years, moving between Los Angeles and New York City, Europe and Asia. From 1975 to 1977 she worked in Iran for the Secretariat of Her Imperial Majesty, the Shahbanou of Iran, which was the source of her interest in early photography in Iran and contemporary Iranian art. Stein has organized exhibitions in all media, primarily on nineteenth- and twentieth-century art, for institutions in the United States, such as The Museum of Modern Art in New York, The National Gallery of Art and The Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., The Toledo Museum of Art, The Center for the Fine Arts in Miami, The Reading Public Museum, Guild Hall Museum of East Hampton, The Detroit Institute of Arts, The Honolulu Academy of the Arts, The Municipal Art Gallery in Los Angeles, Achenbach Foundation for the Graphic Arts in San Francisco, and The Pasadena Museum of California Art. She has also curated exhibitions throughout Asia and Europe. She has published more than a hundred articles and forty books and catalogues related to her curatorial interests.

Claude W. Sui is director and senior curator of the Forum of International Photography at the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim since 2002. He studied Art History, Philosophy, and Ethnology at the universities of Mainz and Frankfurt am Main, doing his doctorate on work by photographer Robert Häusser. Sui has curated numerous notable exhibitions such as “To the Holy Lands – From Mecca and Medina to Jerusalem: Photographs of the 19th Century” (2006), an exhibition about the beginnings of Photography in Arabia. He was appointed as Jury Chairman for the Hasselblad Award

2010 of the Erna- und Victor Hasselblad Foundation, Göteborg (Sweden). Since 2010, he has been teaching History of Photography at the University of Applied Sciences in Mannheim. Sui received as first German photo curator the Colin Ford Award, a curatorial award given by The Royal Photographic Society in 2013. This society is under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Mohammadreza Tahmasbpour is a photographer and photohistorian who graduated with an MA in photography from the Faculty of Fine Arts (University of Tehran and University of Art Tehran) in 1998. He has taught many courses on photography and photohistory at several universities, including the University of Art, Al-Zahra University, and Azad Islamic University. He is a contributor and photographic adviser to the International Qajar Studies Association, as well as to the “Women’s Worlds in Qajar Iran” project. Tahmasbpour was also manager of the Qajar-era photography symposium in Tehran (2009–2010) and the Department of Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO, 2005–2006). He has published over 60 articles in both Iranian and European peer-reviewed journals, and his monographs include *Az nuqreh va nur: Justarha dar tarikh-e ‘akkasi-ye Iran* (Of Silver and Light: Research in the History of Photography of Iran, 2010) and *Naser al-Din: Shah-e ‘akkas* (Naser al-Din: The Photographer Shah, 2002; reprinted 2009).